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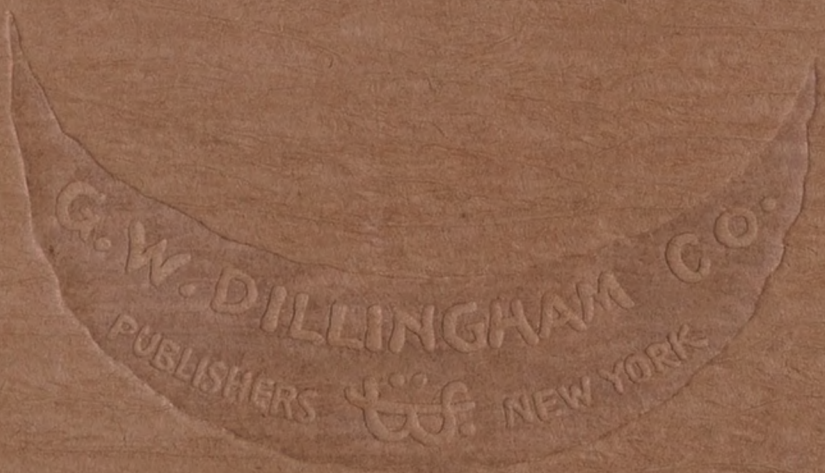
A WOMAN with A RECORD.

A NOVEL BY

MRS. FINLEY ANDERSON.



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A Novel

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MRS. FINLEY ANDERSON

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G. W. Dillingham Co., Publishers
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A WOMAN WITH A RECORD.

CHAPTER I.

A MIDNIGHT REVERIE.

A WOMAN, like a horse, should have a record. Mine is fast enough to win.

Women slike and men adore me ; this increases my vogue and doubles my value.

Youth is slipping from me like a dream. I gathered its roses and crushed them; but there is still a whiff of perfume amid their leaves.

I am modish and well-groomed ; Redfern dresses me. I asked this conundrum at Fred Manton's supper : "What is the difference between God and Redfern?" No one guessed it. I explained that God gave women a skin but Redfern gives us plumage.

They laughed and drank more champagne.

"No beautiful woman should live beyond forty," a married man, my *bête noire*, declared.

"Then begin, at home, to kill," I retorted in defence of my sex.

Ellis Rosseau, my friend, joined issue with me.

"Few women learn the art of fascination, until their roses begin to fade. Science, art, fashion preserve clever women from age ; there is for them only youth and death. The conquests of life are made by women of physical and mental culture within the period from thirty to fifty. Buds and full-bloom roses challenge equal attention from men ; the richer perfume of the rose ofttimes seduces their senses."

"Will you tell us how you held Herbert Lee so many years, a man of fancies varied as the summer flowers ?" Mrs. Willis asked me, with a keen glance from her bead-like black eyes and a flash of her small, glistening teeth that she longed to fasten in my flesh.

"With pleasure, Mrs. Willis," I replied. "I will give you the recipe to use upon your lovers. I drove him with the finest ribbons I could get."

The glasses were refilled, and Ellis Rosseau smiled.

I was painfully sober. Sometimes this mood possesses me. My heart and brain seem frozen.

Herbert, alas, is dead ! He loved me well. His memory thrills my blood like rare old wine. The lost days, the dead days, oh, the beauty of life, then ! is shadowed now.

"Write a book, Lenoir," my friends suggest.

"Tell your own story to the world." I would prefer telling the histories of my friends ; they might be less interesting, but safer to relate.

Have I friends ?

Only among the poor, whose burdens I lighten. They call me a mascot. A little chorus singer who is ill thinks me a saint. The savor of life is to help others. Often the world's most worthless ones are pushed to success. Lacking appreciation or gratitude, they win life's prizes, through good luck and the help of another. The worst blows we receive are given by the hand we have held in friendship.

Mrs. Elmer swears friendship for me. I let Mr. Frost escort me home from her salon the other night. Later, Mrs. Elmer said, with her sweetest smile :

"Dear, did you like Mr. Frost ? I asked him to take you home."

Next time Mr. Frost's call followed his flowers, I said, with an innocent look :

"So sorry, Mr. Frost, your good-nature was imposed upon by Mrs. Elmer the other evening. I shall take care she does not have to *ask* your escort for me again."

"My dear Madame Vaillant," Frost declared, in his tenderest, yet chilling tone, that has won him the *soubriquet* of Jack Frost, "the honor was sought by me ; but if Mrs. Elmer considers herself responsible for my pleasure, let us believe my memory truant."

Spoken with the chivalry of the South, whose men

rank women first; who betray them with a kiss, and cross swords for their honor like gentlemen.

The jealousy, shallowness, and mountebank farce of society have driven me into the world of Bohemia, with its watchword of pleasure; its shimmering mists covering a dozen pasts; its creed of forgetfulness; its light-heartedness and hope; its darkened, restful mornings and its brilliant feverish nights, where light, sound, and color crowd sorrow from the heart; where pastiles perfume the air and wine quickens the blood and flowers line the path from the boudoir to the ball-room; where the siren song of love woos the senses and bewilders the brain. Into this atmosphere of art, music, pleasure and passion, I plunge. Its clever people interest me. I find no stupidity, because, when interest fails, I say, I am stupid to-night, I will go home, smoke a Nestor, sip a liqueur, play with my little dog Yvette, summon a lover, create a situation, rather than be bored with anything.

Occasionally I get nasty and crush people, as I did that Italian, Turkish mongrel-like woman, who, lifting her lorgnette in Mrs. Elmer's salon, asked, "Are there any interesting people here? Are there any women with pasts?"

"My dear Mrs. Dreggs," I said, "have you not observed that the woman with a past has been replaced by the woman with a future?"

Then I went to supper with an artist and forgot the friction with Mrs. Dreggs.

This world of Bohemia accepts me as a mystery,

a woman of moods peculiar and manners perfect. Were they acquired in Belgravia? Did my satins trail their shimmering lustre through foreign courts, or did my gems blaze at the opera balls of Paris?

I sing like a prima-donna, and dance like a *première danseuse*. Was I princess of Belgravia or of Bohemia? Do I enjoy life or accept it? Is my past as smooth as my brow? Have I no story or have I a record?

The veil of silence conceals all. The great heart of Paris hides my birthplace. A dozen foreign capitals share and contradict my career. I am at times an enigma to myself. I am tempted to amuse upper Bohemia by sending out cards reading like this:

MIDNIGHT TO THREE A. M.

LIVING PICTURES.

It is midnight now. Good-night, gay world, sad world! Mine is the gift of making you laugh. Some women make you weep. You have amused me and displeased me; but your roses burn their crimson fragrance into my heart. Good-night, glad world, good-night.

CHAPTER II.

THE PALMIST'S PROPHECY.

CLEVER women do stupid things. Mrs. Dreggs forced herself on me to-day, after my message that I could not accompany her to the theatre this evening.

My *masseuse* was here, and went on oiling me. I have camphor and alcohol, after this, to make me thin.

"You see, my dear Mrs. Dreggs, I am quite a smooth article. You will kindly keep the secrets of my toilet, but you need not mind mentioning my figure."

"But massage is so *passé*, my dear! That was all very well for our mothers, but we *fin de siècle* children seek something different; we affect electricity!"

"There is nothing new under the sun," I quoted, oracularly.

"Evidently you have not met Dr. George Smith," said she.

"Smith? Smith? Really the name seems familiar! It is a new name, you say? Or is Dr. George Smith a new man?"

Mrs. Dreggs shook her finger at me in playful manner. It was a long, lean finger, well manicured at the tip. She smiled, too, showing little white

teeth that I could not help thinking might snap, on occasion, like a terrier dog's!

"It is Dr. Smith's treatment that is new," she explained. "It is very up-to-date."

"Do tell me about it," I urged. "Is it something as soothing as massage?"

"Massage isn't in it with Dr. Smith's electrical treatment, Madame Vaillant. You go to him feeling like a faded leaf, and trip out with the step of a *débutante*."

"You must take me there," I said, with decision.

"With pleasure," assented Mrs. Dreggs. "Won't you lunch with me to-morrow—say at the Plaza, as his office is there. I would be delighted to introduce you."

"To-morrow it is impossible," I replied—"but I have no engagement for Saturday."

"Ah, that would be better," she said; "as then we could go to the matinée afterwards. Suppose we take in Irving and Terry. They are playing Macbeth."

I gave a little shudder. Macbeth! and a matinée! Either one would give me the horrors!

"Thank you—lunch with me," said I, "and we can then see John Drew at the Empire Theatre; but Macbeth is a little too serious. I desire comedy in the mimic world, French Opera, and even Vaudeville. Guilbert and Anna Held's sensuous smile and *risque* songs appeal to my moods and enchain my fancy. The *frou-frous* and chiffons of life please me. I too am a mere burlesquer."

Mrs. Dreggs gave a queer, thin, unmusical laugh, that came from her chest, not from her heart.

"I will tell your fortune," she said. "It was once my business. Mr. Dreggs turned out to be a bad investment for me. When my cash was gone, I put on considerable cheek, a Turkish veil, and an air of mystery, and read the future for a guinea a head."

I aroused to interest in my guest.

"Why did you quit the business?" I inquired.

"One day, in a moment of dignity, after winning at play, or signing a contract with a manager, my husband destroyed the cards, as he had my hopes. He declared that his wife should not degrade him by telling fortunes. This ended my career as a seeress. The experience was amusing. I met at good houses, in the evening, people who in the morning had consulted the veiled prophetess concerning their intrigues and lovers. I escaped detection and paid the living expenses of my handsome spouse."

I ventured a comment on Mr. Dreggs's good looks.

"Yes," his truthful wife admitted; "but his mouth tells the story of a misspent life. Sometimes the tale is written in the eyes and beneath them, but the weakness of my husband's mouth should have warned me not to trust him. I was much older than he. I had looks then, and fine clothes and gems. Disappointment deepened the lines in my face and my heart, my clothes grew shabby, my jewels were first pawned, then sold. To-day Sam must effect a loan. I am powerless to help him more. He *must* have money

to get out of town. He *must* have it for his board bill, his luggage is held; money means to him ability to grasp his latest chance."

"If he fail in borrowing, what then?" I asked.

"I must be held as hostage," the woman scornfully said. "I have been so often in this position, that I do not mind it now."

"This is the shadow of Bohemia," I thought. "I have felt only its sunshine."

"Let me read your palm," Mrs. Dreggs offered. "I don't go in much for palmistry, I prefer cards. The lines reveal only the past, the cards tell all."

"What nonsense," I laughed. "A clever woman like you, having faith in a system worked out of bits of pasteboard."

"Your line of life is long; your past is checkered, the heart line broken. Shall I tell *all* I see?"

"Do not hesitate. I am beyond being hurt," I replied.

"Then you are beyond happiness. One must feel a blow that one may appreciate a caress."

"Do you believe in the animal devotion that permits a lover to abuse you?" I asked, looking sharply at Mrs. Dreggs.

"Yes, when love is born of animal instinct, when the first attraction was of the senses, and the bond is of the flesh, only," she said. "I know a woman with a career on two continents, whose throat, beneath her fluffy boa, had a purple stain. Wedded now to another, she admits that the big, blonde brute whose

hand bruised her white flesh was the only man she ever loved. I understand that emotion, so do you, Madame Vaillant. If you have not met such a type of man, you will meet him; the blows he will deal you will hurt your heart more than that man's hand hurt the other woman's throat."

"You read this in my hand?"

"I feel it in my heart," the woman said. "Your career is brightened by success, not by happiness."

"The one means the other," I laughed. "Take the cards, Mrs. Dreggs."

I began to feel creepy. I did not wish this seeress to penetrate my past.

"Here is trouble with a woman, treachery of a man, financial difficulties. A new man in your life, a fatal influence. Let me warn you to avoid this influence. You are nearing a turn in your career. The road you will tread is thorn-lined and cloud-hung. Its bits of sunshine are so rare, they seem to gleam through a mist. A heavy fog surrounds your future; the horn of danger already faintly sounds through the sunshine of to-day. Shuffle and cut the cards once more," she said. "The same dark knave pursues you. A crisis approaches. Let us trust it be an episode, not a tragedy."

CHAPTER III.

AN INTROSPECTIVE COMMUNION.

AGAIN it is night. The ball is over. I am moody. That woman affected my nerves. Her prophecy may be realized. I am unfit to be alone. I need always an audience of men.

Sentiment is not good food for me. I pitched over my ideals long ago.

What is this? A note from the Austrian, that little black-eyed devil who hopes to place me in his collection of feminine gems.

He read me quite well as we strolled in the conservatory to-night, while the orchestra played "The Honeymoon March." The fountain flashed in the moonlight, the crowd swept by, while the Austrian did his sweetest to win my fancy.

Here is the continuation of his assault on my heart. I must have a cigarette while perusing this outburst of passion.

"Queen of women." This is clever. "Let me make you happy. We will go into heaven together. You seek pleasure, not happiness. You have not loved. There is a love of the soul and of the senses. You have experienced only the latter. You have had

fancies, passions, but not real love. Let me teach you this, my star."

Enough of this. The Austrian would win Lenoir Vaillant with a love ditty.

Cannot he comprehend that the avenue to my heart is paved with gold ; that the entrance to my boudoir is hung with flowers ; that the price of my smile is a gem ; that my favors have cost men a fortune, and a lifetime of regret? I hinted that to-morrow will be my birthday. Reference to age before men is unwise, but an occasional birthday is not bad.

I will light my Nestor with the Austrian's love-ditty!

The men I meet are not magnetic. I really long for love, the one perfect sensation of life. Love, with its mystic charm, its fatal influence. Love, the heaven-born instinct, apart from passion's mad spell. Love, to lift my life from depths of *diablerie* to heights of heaven. Love, the divine ! Let it descend like an aureole on the life of a woman with a shadowed past, a restless present and a hopeless future. I will accept its penalty with its blessing. Give me true love, dear God ! I am undone to-night. My dual natures conflict. I must steady my nerves. The room seems full of phantoms. Thought brings lines in the face. Some one asked Ellis Rosseau the secret of his boyish, unlined face.

I answered for him : "He has neither vices nor heart."

I must make the creed of Bernhardt mine. "No yesterday, no to-morrow."

Incomparable woman, of moods like the sea, with deathless passion and perpetual youth ; the soft voice, like a nun's at vespers ; the tigress eyes alluring to destroy ; the restless brain, demanding the world for its audience, the kingdom of art for its throne. I should have been an actress. My feet would have gone to men's souls. God gave me fine tints, like a sunset, with a nature like an opal, changeful and fiery.

I had better been born dead ! A great artist declares me too critical to attain happiness, for myself, while showering it on others. Another adorer says that I am like froth on champagne ; when I enter a room I mount at once to his brain ; when I depart, only dregs remain.

Pretty tricks of speech. I prefer Ellis Rosseau's interpretation of me :—

"Lenoir, you are a child in innocence, a Cleopatra in experience," he once said.

This man always gives me ideas and puts me at my best. He does not make love to me. "I am a better friend than lover," he declares.

He does not fatigue me, as most men do. This afternoon, while I rested, after a reception, Rosseau dropped in.

"Dine with me," I said. Dinner was served in my boudoir. A little feast of dainties, that Rosseau loves, with the taste of sybarite and school-girl combined. Terrapin and sweet-breads, topped off with an ice, instead of toasted biscuit, Rochefort and *démi-*

tasse. This man drinks Kumyss and Vichy ; no stimulants. He claims they do not stimulate, but exhaust the vitality and mentality.

We drifted into the cycle of thought which cements our friendship. Rosseau keeps a little silver-bound book, like a prayer-book, in which he notes the epigrams he hears.

"If we met oftener, Lenoir," he said "my note-book would be quite full."

I appreciate these pretty speeches from Rosseau, for they come from his heart.

"Your breadth of view on the subject of marriage and divorce pleases me. It expresses the sentiments of the great silent masses of cultured people, who are rapidly throwing off the yoke of social prejudice and freeing their bodies from the slavery of uncongeniality. You would not doom a life to misery and sin in the crude beliefs of ancestry, to the dogmas of church and priest. Let the cry of nature silence the voice of the priesthood."

"Rosseau," I said, "my idea of love is like art in development. It needs breadth, coloring, embroidering with new patterns and shades."

"Paris has a bit of romance that appealed to my fancy," my guest said. "It is the story of a one-time operatic star, who, unable to wed her lover because of his parents' opposition and the laws of France, lives as his loyal wife unrecognized by society, unknown to a world once at her feet. Marchesi visits her, but dares not ask her to her salon to meet the great lights

of the musical world and the youth entrusted to her care."

"This woman, this real wife, should not be ostracized, but canonized," I declared.

I went on to explain to my friend my ideas regarding passion versus love. "Women of high intellectual attainments or great hearts are swayed by passion, but sentiment is its poetry. Without it a woman sinks to the level of a dog or a man."

"What do you think of a woman and man with dead passion, with frozen hearts, living on in marriage?" Rosseau asked, leaning across the table and fastening his eyes on mine.

"Such association, instead of marriage, is crucifixion," I replied.

"I thought you would give that answer;" he said. "You knew much of the late Mrs. Rosseau. I want you to understand that I considered our marriage a pleasant friendship, that ended without becoming a melodrama. This is the proper climax when two people weary of one another, whether or not bound by the tie of marriage."

"Would you wed again?" I questioned.

"Yes," he replied. "But not for love. I could not harmonize with a woman less clever; while the friction of one so mercurial would exhaust my mentality and disturb my atmosphere of work and of art."

"Play your trump card," I suggested. "Marry for money or social position."

A smile cold as sunlight on a glacier touched

Rosseau's lips; the look of a devil flashed in his fine eyes.

"Find the woman for me," he sneered.

"Young or old?"

"Old. Fifty to seventy; it matters not. I do not want a companion, only a banker," he laughed.

"What equivalent would you offer this woman?" I asked.

Rosseau's face lighted up. "I would make her life interesting," he said. "I would build with her gold a little palace; design wonderful gowns for her; find rare gems with a history, and surround her with fascinating people who do interesting things."

"The man who makes his wife's life interesting merits a reward. It is so rare a situation," I acquiesced.

Not many years ago the Rosseaus were poor in goods, but rich in happiness. The woman was of the serpent type, with flashing eyes and teeth. She was without figure or youth, but with rare mentality and physical magnetism; the style which flatters and enslaves men. A woman with the purse of a pauper and the taste of a duchess; a willowy creature, in plush and crêpes, held in place by old silver clasps and pinned on her shoulders with antique gems. Women of this type have pins, not stitches, in their garments.

When unable to buy fine stuffs, Mrs. Rosseau posed in china silk, made like a Greek robe and girdled with an Etruscan belt. With only one garment be-

neath this robe, she lounged on yellow silk cushions, and with melting glances brought men to her feet.

At this period, Rossseau's enthusiasm had gone for all but art. His heart and his face had become frigid. The woman's work was completed.

These two did not quarrel; they quit. A marital misfit thrown aside.

The woman sailed away to a new port, and the romance of Rosseau's life was ended.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOND FORGED BY HELOISE.

ANOTHER birthday, with no real home, few friends, only some would-be lovers and a little girl pet who gave me these violets and a kiss.

I should weed romance out of Heloise's head. She must have a great career, with her beauty. I will give her distinction and teach her the arts the world has taught me. She shall not be coarsened and degraded. She shall simply learn to control her affections.

At midnight Heloise came to my rooms, to say good-night. Drawing a footstool to my feet, the girl clasped her hands in my lap and looking up in my face said, "Dear Lenoir, I was strangely drawn to you when first we met. I feel there will come a sorrow to me that you must share. The bond between us is strong. You are to help or to destroy me. Your future is linked with mine."

The girl believes herself in love. This is not her first experience, but it is of greater intensity.

Heloise is nineteen. Her charm for me is naturalness. She confesses her love with the abandon of a

woman who has tasted pleasure, yet with the innocence of a girl who has only pictured it.

I must stand by her. She needs a friend. I must try to make her life as mine should have been.

People will sneer at the friendship of a princess of the world of pleasure for a girl of nineteen. I am beyond caring for the world's opinion. All I desire are its benefits.

Heloise lighted a cigarette (I did not teach her to smoke) and told me her little love-tale, while she touched my throat with her lips and stroked my hand, with her soft, magnetic touch.

"It is my fate, dear," she said, "to love the man who does not return it. You cannot understand this. You are too partial to judge me as men do, but it *is* my fate. Some day I shall marry, with this passion for another in my heart. The result you can foresee. It will be a few months of fidelity, then senseless flattery will turn my foolish head, 'the inborn passion' that tempts me now will sway me entirely then. I shall go the road other young married women tread. At first I may have but one lover, then as my moral nature slowly dies, I will increase my conquests and smirch my honor blacker and blacker with sin."

The girl's eyes shone with the intensity of passion; her white teeth gleamed through her parted lips; her hair swept her shoulders, like a dusky cloud; her hand tightened its clasp on mine; a mist gathered before

my eyes, and through it I seemed to see the picture she had painted of her life.

"Heloise dear," I said, clasping her in my arms, "I will win your lover for you. You shall taste the sweets of love, but you must not wince at its poison. Remember that young as he is, Frank is called a high roller."

"We can roll together," the girl laughed, touching my lips with her cupid bow of a mouth; the pretty French mouth will bring her so many of life's sweets, maybe so much of its sorrow.

CHAPTER V.

LENOIR ANATHEMATIZES MEN.

FRED MANTON sent me this turquoise pin from Dreicer's exquisite stock. He wrote a gracious note, declaring that Time pays me compliments.

Fannie Prince says she was twenty-seven last week. Four seasons ago she acknowledged to twenty-six.

A woman's age does not matter. It is *how* she looks. She must be clever to be fifty and look thirty-five.

It was nice in Fred to remember my birthstone for his souvenir. Success the turquoise means. Success was predicted for me by that uncanny Mrs. Dreggs. In what line, I wonder?

To win the hearts or rather the passions of men is no honor—only a few have hearts. If I complete this little record of my time, it will sell, because Lenoir Vaillant wrote it. Curiosity will prompt my set to taste the dressing I make for my social salad.

There will be missing links in my story, as in my life. My embroideries, friendships, loves and work are incomplete. Some day the wheels of my mental machinery will stop. My work will be done.

Another day gone with no red letter to mark it.

I am not interested in anything. What shall I do with my life?

"Saint" never did better work than in rescuing me from myself last evening. She brought to me Colonel Martin, a man with a flattering tongue and clever wit. We went to Koster's, had a box, and took in the variety and living pictures.

Three specimens of gilded youth occupied an adjoining box; they smoked cigarettes and looked bored, until a dancer whirled on the stage, with flashing, sensuous eyes and low-cut frock. One man blinked, another tossed his cigarette aside, the third pulled himself well to the front.

"It is the first sign of life they have given," I whispered to "Saint."

The nude in art appeals to me. The living pictures charm my fancy. I realize only sentiment in the human form. A certain woman's voice and manner repelled me until I saw her in a Turkish bath, and took in her bearings. The slender, straight limbs like a race-horse, the fine curves and smooth, firm, shining flesh. "If only you possessed heart and soul," I thought, "you fine human thing."

"Saint" revels in Bohemia, though of Puritan blood. "Saint" is a burlesque; we cannot call her a devil. It would not be civil. The world that says so much and knows so little, concludes that this girl's morals must be as erratic as the stories she sends to press. It wishes her to be wicked, on the theory that "to the pure all things seem impure."

Poor, deluded world! Little it knows of the real life of its victims, of the eyes that smile, while the heart bleeds, of the despair that succeeds revelry, and of the little boats that pass in the daytime, freighted with dead hopes.

One must suffer, that one may tell a story to the world. One must have love before playing Juliet.

Passion does not always destroy. It often dignifies. It puts new blood in their veins, softer emotions in the heart. It shades and rounds and perfects life. When it does not drag the soul down to hell, it lifts it to heaven.

An oracle of society says, "A society woman without a lover is like a kite without a tail :—both fall flat." Most married women of society have an understudy.

I am invited to a "dove" dinner this week, with eleven other "doves."

That the dinner party be not an Adamless Eden, thirty men are to join us at nine o'clock. Thirty serpents descending upon the doves. The serpent in Eden was a man. How else could Eve have been tempted.

The serpents of Earth, alas, who destroy the little white dove, innocence, in the hearts of the young, are men of jaded passions, seeking new sensations or a repetition of the old sad tale of lost virtue; men who live on vanity and feed on conquest, whose glance is poison, and touch is death. This is the type that crowd club windows, with coarse criticism on all femininity that passes by.

"She is a fine stepper, well rounded, good bust, swagger girl, straight of limb, get on to her curves, wants a lover, knows a good thing when she sees it." Thus the gamut is run of man's loose speech and coarse desire.

We seek these human reptiles for the rose-bowers of our daughters; they are entrusted with them at the play, in the cafés and alone in our drawing-rooms, with shaded lamps and silence.

Is it strange that virtue has become a jest in the crowded cities of our land! That girls, like my poor little Heloise, have the desires of a woman in the heart of a school-girl!

Men are responsible for the loose morals of the girl of the period; their reckless, unsatiated passions fill divorce courts and dens of sin.

My life was shaped by a man. The finish depends on the start.

My life has been a succession of Waterloos!

At present I am financially stranded. I must get a check from old Moneybags, on promises. Three seasons he has been daft about me. Were he a widower I could marry him and go in the swagger set. I have only a few of their vices, but the others I could soon acquire.

"Marrying a beautiful woman is dangerous pastime," old Moneybags confided to me.

True; but flirting with one may be equally dangerous, at least to your purse, my old friend.

Rumor tells of a lover Madame Moneybags formerly met at a French dressmaker's flat.

The woman was Madame's maid, until the flat was rented by the lover, for the trysting place of society's favored queen and himself. The *denouement* was characteristic of the French. The girl's increasing demands being unmet, she went to the husband with the tale and revealed to Madame, in defiant shamelessness, that the caresses of the "dear friend" were not alone received by the mistress but were bestowed quite as frequently upon the maid.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

THE past week was full of events that I have been unable to chronicle. Gloom followed gladness. I revelled in the brightness of Life, and felt the shadow of Death.

I was in ball dress when a message came that one of my heart children, Rosette, the chorus singer, was dying.

A picture came before me of the cottage at Aix, where I first saw Rosette, dancing on the grass, with a wreath of flowers on her head. Her mother, a beautiful woman, sang at the Grand Opera in Paris. Rosette rarely went to the opera. Her mother did not wish her to go on the stage.

Rosette once told me of the visits of a fine gentleman who took her on his knee and called her his dear little girl.

At last the fine gentleman's visits to the cottage ceased.

Rosette said he had gone across the sea.

The mother's step grew heavy, her face quite white. One night on her return from the opera, a sharp pain struck her heart.

"Be good, always be good, Rosette," she whispered, stroking the child's hand. Then she kissed her, and falling back on her couch the woman was dead.

On an old French *escritoire*, in a gold frame set with Rhinestones, was a man's photograph; his features were reflected in Rosette's tear-stained face. Removing it from the frame, I read on the reverse side:

"To Elise, with my deathless love."

There was no clue to the man's identity, only that brilliant, mocking face, with its wicked eyes.

A distant relative took charge of the child, and made her a chorus singer.

One night I recognized her in an opera here in New York. Seeking her at the end of the opera, I gave her my card, and she often visited me before a fever attacked her.

Now the voice was silent, and the heart would soon cease to beat.

Life had been a tragedy to Rosette since her birth!

Tossing aside my jewels, I threw a cloak over my evening gown, jumped into a cab, and soon reached Rosette's home.

The wind moaned like a lost soul. The snow lay like a shroud on the quiet streets. Rosette's home was drearier still. A few logs burned on the hearth, and in a little brass bed the girl lay, white and wan.

Placing some red roses on her pillow, I pressed one in her hand.

"Rosette, smell this, dear. Doesn't it recall the footlights and music?"

"*Oui, madame*," the girl faintly said, her voice full of tears and husky with death. I am sleepy and cold," she whispered. "I am glad I always remembered poor mamma and came home quite alone. Is there a real God?"

"Yes, my little Rosette, there is a good spirit who guards you."

Neither prayer nor priest were needed to guide the girl's soul beyond the shades of death.

I sometimes call myself an agnostic. So many faiths have failed me. But in the shadow of death I strove to light this girl's path with the torch of heaven.

The red rose fell from her thin hand. I placed it on her heart and wiped the cold brow.

A flutter of the eyelids, a weary sigh, and the end had come.

The snow had ceased falling. Stars were blinking in the cold, wintry sky, the moonlight shone through the window and fell on the silent dead.

I watched beside Rosette, after the nurse had prepared her poor little body for its final sleep.

The jewelled frame, encasing the unknown man's picture glistened in the moonlight. The girl had kept it through her wandering life.

I again read its legend: "To Elise, with my deathless love."

"Maybe the man isn't as bad as he seems," I mused.

"Maybe he didn't know the woman cared so much; maybe he meant to return some day, and that some day was too late."

All gone, mother, child, and love. A shipwreck of passion, an epitome of life.

I put the picture in the pocket of my cloak and drove home in the cold, gray dawn.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FATAL MEETING.

"MEN are a tough lot," Will Swift admitted to me, at Mr. Dellac's studio *musicale*.

"Why not women, too?"

"Because it hurts them more. They go home and *think*. Men only *enjoy*."

"Cannot women drown thought in pleasure?" I asked.

"Not exactly," the big, blonde Apollo explained. "Women deaden conscience, they cannot kill it. I remain out at night and find on reaching home that my wife has been crying her eyes out. This is her way of punishing me—she tries to reach my conscience."

"Vain attempt," I laughed.

Not far back in this man's past was a chapter with an actress, at whose door the ruin of more than one life was lain. This episode ended, he married a dashing girl with no past and high hopes of a future.

Five years have changed hope into acceptance, with this winsome wife. To-day, at Dellac's *musicale*, while Plançon's voice rang through the crowded

rooms, the pretty woman flirted like mad with a handsome Southerner.

"There is no jealousy in this age," I overheard a woman say. "No one cares enough to be jealous."

"Is this true?" I thought.

A woman in blue velvet and old lace brushed against me. I caught the breath of the violets she wore and the glitter of her flashing eyes. I do not like this woman. She is snake and peacock combined. She goes in for literature and women's clubs, is unique in belongings, and entertains lavishly.

She always laughs, as she talks, a joyless laugh, which jars on me like a mockery of mirth.

I pity her, in her jewels and splendid clothes. Her life, like her laughter, is out of tune.

I once heard her husband confess to have never let a good thing escape him. Possibly that is the cause of his wife's mirthless laugh.

This studio is matchless, outside of Paris. Its hangings are from the Orient, its works of art from the treasure-places of the world, its canvasses from the master hand and tireless brain of a true artist.

Punch is served in a crimson tent; women lounge on broad, inviting divans, the effect of their gowning is increased by the neutral tones of old tapestries and the color of the hangings, with their dash of gold.

The front salon is crowded with devotees of music and art. Upon a canopied dais, richened and softened with old rugs, beautiful women sit in the shaded

light, while clever ones mingle with and catch the friction of the throng.

Pressing his way through the rooms came Albert Vane, a stockbroker, of some looks, much conceit, good form and plenty of nerve.

He recognized in me big fish for his net. I first met him at Monte Carlo.

Fixing his keen, metallic eyes on mine and smiling enticingly, he asked:

"Do you still gamble, Madame Vaillant, or has the prosaicness of New York driven the fever of Paris from your brain?"

"I find New York lively enough, Mr. Vane, and I still gamble a little in stocks. Speculate is the polite way to put it."

"Beg pardon," said Mr. Vane, "but at Monte Carlo it was dead cold gambling we all indulged in. On this side we speculate, only."

I explained to Mr. Vane that luck was against me just now, and turned to present him to Heloise Neville, who danced over to me, seeing a good-looking man at my side.

Heloise was radiant, in a bodice of *cerise* satin, draped with yards and yards of black chiffon, banded on the shoulders with black velvet and Rhinestone buckles. A tiny bonnet of jet was perched on the back of her hair, and a bunch of violets adorned her muff.

Heloise imitates me in this fad of wearing violets, I am her model in many things.

Albert Vane will like Heloise.

I have no other use for this man than as a volatile acquaintance. I may go into stocks more deeply through his information, and he can have a seat now and then at my table. Contact with a few of my richer guests will give us both opportunities that this keen-eyed, cold-voiced man will take advantage of.

I can make a deal with him. He is "out for the dust!"

My instinct is against Albert Vane. I regret having let him know Heloise.

Breaking up their tête-â-tête by presenting a less dangerous man to the girl, I took Vane off to the punch-room. One of his good points is that he does not drink to excess; even this indicates the cold method of his nature. Physically he is tropical, with a heart of ice. He *could* become stone.

Heloise must not know him too well. He is quite forty. Men of his age and type make saddest havoc in a girl's life.

Her presentiment flashed in my mind amid the music of the gladsome scene.

"I feel that there will come a sorrow to me that you must share. You are to help or to destroy me."

I must help Heloise by warning her against Albert Vane; my fate seems to be to do good with one hand and harm with the other.

Morris Brownmore joined Vane and me in the punch-room. If less dashing and youthful than when half the matinée girls in town were at his feet, Brownmore retains his fascination of manner and speech.

It is said he once claimed power to win any woman. I quite understand this. His magnetic personality and wit are dangerous even to me.

He plays with his audiences, as Bernhardt sometimes does when a milliner's bill or a lover has given her trouble. When interested in his work, Brownmore acts superbly. When displeased with cast or play, or in a mood, he punishes his audience with carelessness.

"Are you in New York now?" Albert Vane asked Brownmore.

"No. In Harlem," was the quick response.

His reply to an offer from a Boston manager was: "Your offer received. I sent it to Puck."

I shall have a theatrical supper some Sunday evening and ask Brownmore as a guest. He amuses me.

Bohemia must amuse me. Society must be fed, flattered, and amused.

The difference between the "smart set" and the clever one is, that the women of society travel more and speak more languages. They are better dressed and groomed; their vices, pleasures, habits and heartaches, are similar. The woman of Bohemia is less self-controlled. She makes more scenes. She has less veneer and more heart.

The young women of the swagger set advertise their charms in full length pictures of themselves in the Sunday papers. The limit of this social notoriety was reached by a beautiful girl showing up in print in a gown, *très decollêtée*, with mere shoulder bands.

To accentuate the sensationalism of the cut, the young lady held a Japanese spaniel in her lap.

Girls of this pattern are clever at repartee. A man asked one of them to accompany him to the French ball.

"I might be discovered," she demurred.

"Go in tights," he suggested.

"I might be explored," she quickly retorted,

This young woman went to the French ball, last season, with several of her set. They wore black satin dominoes, and leaving their box when the fun reached its height, mingled with the mad whirl of the half world, in the dance and rough merry making on the Garden floor.

A French ball in New York bores me. It lacks the *esprit* of Paris. The French are not quite themselves outside their own splendid Capitol.

"Society has made rapid strides in license, while the French ball has become too decent," Fred Manton declares.

The line between the two worlds constantly narrows.

Society completes its luncheon and dinners with Crême à Yvette and Nestors. Bohemia takes cognac with its *demitasse* and smokes Caporals between courses.

Both drink absinthe *frappé*.

I lunched recently at the Waldorf with six other ladies. It might have suggested the seven Virgins, had not the hostess's husband settled us in place and

evidently the bill as well, before going down town. These women were eminently proper and dull; only two were divorced. We gossiped a bit about the scandals of the one hundred and fifty decent people remaining in society, and decided that the ladies of the two most notable scandals and separations, were in fault. Then we speculated as to the forthcoming modes.

The luncheon was a model of virtue, stupidity and temperance. Following blue points came sweetbreads and green peas, served with Apollinaris.

"No 'Polly' for me," I thought, and the sweet bread stuck in my throat.

With the birds and salad one bottle of Ruinart was served. Three women declined it. My glass was filled. Some remained in the bottle when we topped off with coffee and cheese.

No cocktail at the start, no *pousse café* at the finish. I prefer a duet at a table in "the Midway" at night, with all the chappies and the brightest women in town sitting or strolling by.

This luncheon recalls the saying of a little soubrette, that she would rather be "a chippie in the Tenderloin, than a princess in Harlem."

Heloise, in her immatureness, declares she would rather be "the other woman" than the wife.

Poor, deluded, fated girl! Little she knows of "the other woman's" woes, of her lonely hours, her envy of women less clever, but better placed than herself.

The cloak of a husband often covers moral raggedness; but his neglect and lack of affection bring compensation, in the wife's power to sweep her silken gowns through the halls of fashion, to pick and choose from its devotees, to make and unmake a woman's reputation or her career.

The woman of fashion adds to her jewel-box and goes to more balls when a scandal touching her home sweeps the town.

"The other woman," tossed aside, and mayhap made desperate, strikes a lower note in life's fatal scale, and stills its music forever, with a bullet through her passionate heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN AFFINITY IN A BROKERS' OFFICE.

THE offices of Bull & Bear, Bankers & Brokers, are the finest in town. Their customers' feet sink in soft velvet carpets, as their money goes into the full coffers of the noted firm. Broad cushioned chairs invite to ease. All the humorous papers of the day distract men's thoughts from the loss of their gold.

A great board covering nearly one side of the wall records the stock fluctuations which make or unmake the onlooker's day. A gilded clock ticks the restless hours away. Two small writing-desks are for customers. One is dark for the losers, the other is light for winners.

The dark one is oftener used.

Business goes on at a rapid rate in these splendid offices. A few rich men beat the game; the poor ones get left. It illustrates the Bible creed, "To him that hath shall be given."

These wise men get on the inside of deals and are in touch with the master minds of finance. They are let into the formation and breaking up of pools. While the rank and file of speculators await advances

on points given out, these chiefs of the street have already unloaded on private information as to the passage of dividends or the earnings of a road.

It is a great and mighty game that is played each day, ending in a very large time for the winner, or a tragedy for the loser.

The fever of Wall Street poisons the blood for all time. Once a speculator, always one. There is no turning back. Fortunes melt away, lines come in the face, the hair is streaked with gray, heads and hearts ache, homes are wrecked, hopes destroyed, but the game goes ever on.

The Stock Exchange is the big faro bank of the country; brokers are the dealers, customers the players. When the money and nerve of one are gone, another replaces him. From ten in the morning, when hope runs high, until three in the afternoon, when it has ebbed and flowed, the great game of the world is played.

Wall Street is the main spring of trade. Success there means success everywhere.

No class of men spend money more lavishly than brokers. The best seats in the theatres, choicest viands in restaurants, finest turn-outs on the drive, are theirs. This may last a few months or always.

The broker beats the game at the start. The customer may beat it at the finish. No men are better dressed or more generous. A stingy broker would meet with no toleration from his class.

I went to-day to the office of Messrs. Bull & Bear,

and was met with a smile by Mr. Albert Vane, the junior member of the firm.

I might almost say he received me with open arms as he ushered me into his private office.

"Any clever tips to-day?" I asked.

"Nothing special. I am bullish on the Grangers. Let me buy you a hundred 'Paul' at the market. It is good for a couple of points."

"You may get me a hundred 'Paul' on a point reaction."

"Better buy it now," Vane insisted.

"See here, Albert Vane," I said, smiling my sweetest in his handsome face, "I am here to give points, not to get them."

Vane did not look flattered, but he still smiled.

"You asked for my views," he said.

"Quite right. I got them. I wondered if they would coincide with my information."

A skeptical look came into his eyes. "Playing the market on points is a losing business," he declared.

Then I told him of a call a woman made on me earlier in the day. Her object was to induce me to put up money for a deal to be managed by a broker on private information. I was to get half profits, the other half being divided between the interested parties. There was to be a statement each week, and assured success.

Matching my brains against the woman's tongue, I gathered the name of the millionaire representing the

great corporation now buying the stock, on which the deal was made. Their object being to control the property, that surely had a bright future.

"Buy it on all drops," the woman advised. "It will shortly sell at 80."

She also demonstrated the impossibility of an outside broker successfully handling the stock, because, as he bought, the insiders might sell.

"Only the throne or one at its feet can know the secret workings of this most important deal," the woman argued.

Albert Vane listened, with an incredulous smile.

"It is a skin game. I don't trust points from women," he laughingly said; "but come to luncheon with me and we will drink to your success and mine."

Albert Vane made no love to me in Paris or at Monte Carlo, where the play ran high, and his pale face was lowered to mine as we staked our gold on the green table, side by side.

Money was his God then!

"It is his God now," I thought, as we sipped Perrier Jouet together.

If this man has use for me, I, in turn, have use for him.

I like his manner. He pulled my gown aside from the dust, as we brushed against a doorway. His comments on its fit pleased me. His compliments on my figure and bonnet appealed to me.

I take a woman's delight in admiration from men,

but the stunning stockbroker cannot reach my heart. My knowledge of the world is too varied for his shallow nature to comprehend. His *rôle* is to win the fancy of a fickle girl, and not the love of a woman's heart.

"Pretty girl that Miss Neville, to whom you presented me the other day," Vane mused, toying with his salad, and still trying to fix my fancy with his gaze.

"Yes, Heloise *is* pretty, and a coquette. She possesses the fickleness and charm of youth. I am rather fond of the girl and would dislike seeing her harmed."

"Is that a shot at me?"

"It is the expression of my heart. Youth should wear the lilies of purity, not the roses of passion," I feelingly replied.

"You affect violets," Vane commented.

"Yes, they are emblematic of the middle ground, and should adorn the woman neither maid nor wife. They breathe of pleasures past, and allure to pleasures possible."

"The violet brings the fragrance of spring. It seems the fitting flower of youth. Your girl friend wears them," Vane demurred.

"Heloise desires to be like me. My tastes as to the toilet, my caprices and friends she seeks for her own."

"Let me hope to be classed as your friend," Albert Vane laughingly said; "and remember, Lenoir, that Miss Neville's honor shall be safe with me. I would take lilies to her, but I would offer the crimson rose of passion to you."

I suggested that Vane dine with me at seven on Friday. "I would make an earlier date, but you brokers are engaged so long ahead," I declared.

As the restaurant was near his office, Mr. Vane asked me to return there with him, for a glance at the closing market.

"I will, with your permission, write a couple of letters and then drive you home," he said.

In the private office a man awaited the broker's return. Vane received him with more than usual *empressement* of manner.

"A good customer," I thought.

The broker did not at once present the man to me, but led him off to a distant corner of the room.

"I will not detain you long," he said, in an aside to me.

I studied this man's face while waiting. It was cold, with strange lights in the amber eyes. The white brow was shaded by dark-brown waving hair, the large ears, almost flat across the top, turned back from the face, denoting an untrustworthy, selfish, possibly evil nature. The straight, rather large nose gave the face a suggestion of character which it otherwise lacked; the mouth was weak, with sensuous lips, drooping at the corners. Glistening teeth, beneath a dark moustache, made the stranger's smile most fascinating.

I glanced again and again into those wondrous eyes. Could they darken and flash in the heat of rage or the fierceness of passion?

I was marvellously drawn to this man, who chatted flippantly with Albert Vane. He attracted my worse nature and repelled my better one.

I never resist a caprice, a fancy, or a passion. These impulses make or mar my life. I am not so much fatalist as believer in our own power to save ourselves. Still, my life, and the lives I have studied, seem to have the dark threads of destiny interwoven with the golden ones of hope and desire and faith.

"It is a problem beyond our ken," I mused, while making a mental sketch of this "new man," who had come across my path.

The broker arose, and coming over to me requested permission to present his friend, Monsieur Solon Maurel, a Frenchman by birth, but some time resident of New York.

As the man's eyes were fixed upon me in acknowledgment of the introduction, the pupils seemed to dilate and darken, until the amber light faded out of them.

His superb physique attracted me more than his face. His tall, lithe figure was attired with Parisian elegance. Although appearing to be a large man, he was not over five feet ten in height and weighed about one hundred and seventy pounds.

In my travels over two continents, of all the superb men I had met this Frenchman, Solon Maurel, was to my fancy the most distinguished.

As both men sat beside me, I thought the broker's flippant style and bright, reckless smile, contrasted

well with the stranger's hard, brilliant fascinating, face, manner, and speech. Yet, Maurel, I felt, could draw the soul out of my body with his changeful eyes, and deep, rich voice.

"Albert Vane for amusement and use. Solon Maurel for love," I decided, with the keen divination which should save me from my doom.

"You are not French by birth, Madame Vaillant," Maurel asserted, rather than questioned.

I told him that my mother was an American, my father a Frenchman; that Paris was my birthplace, its language my childish tongue, its customs, pleasures and people dear to my heart. I added that my parents lay side by side in *Père la Chaise*, and that the wide world was my home.

During my acquaintance with Albert Vane he had not elicited this much information from me regarding my life.

Had Solon Maurel held and questioned me with his eyes and speech still more, I would have revealed my entire past to him. I felt my identity sinking into his; my will being controlled by those marvellous, magnetic, amber eyes.

"Are you quite ready to accompany me home?" I asked Vane.

Holding my hand out to the Frenchman, I murmured something about trusting we should meet again, then moved towards the door.

An irresistible impulse made me turn and ask M. Maurel to join us at dinner on Friday. I told him

that my other guests would be Mr. Vane, and Miss Heloise Neville.

During the drive home I was *distraite*, and scarcely heeded the broker's chaff as to the impression his friend had made upon me.

"You are not susceptible, as I have found to my sorrow," he laughed, "but Maurel is always fatal to women. I know not why, but his *esclandres* with women of the *haut-monde* and his tragedies with women of the *demi-monde* have been noted here and in Europe. I marvel that we did not run against him at Monte Carlo. He is a desperate gambler. I don't mind telling you that he is called a *roué*, as well. Considering your great caution, is it wise to bring Miss Neville in touch with a man so fatal to the fair?"

"If she can resist you she will be entirely safe with Maurel," I philosophized.

A little shiver went through me. Would Maurel, too, be bewitched with the beauty and youthful charms of Heloise?

Solon Maurel's face haunts me to-night like a ghost of the past. Where have I seen it before? Not in *my* past have those hypnotic eyes done their fatal work. He has figured in the story of some other woman I have known. It baffles me. I don't like Solon Maurel. He is without heart, honor, or soul. Has he come to me in dreams, or have we jostled in the crowd of Paris?

A fancy strikes me. The cottage at Aix, Elise

and the dead child. I have it at last. Here is the picture of the face which smiled on me to-day, more world-worn and emphasized by time, yet the same. The souls of two dead women cry out to me against this man, a wrecker of hearts and hopes, a destroyer of innocence.

Yet I, who would save women from sin and from sorrow, will bring Heloise under this masterful influence, more deadly than opium, which steeps the senses alone, while this man's fatal charm may enslave her soul.

Heloise, ever Heloise! Whence springs my tenderness for this baby-faced girl? Let her look out for herself. Albert Vane will fill her little measure of love. But to me, starving for its food and thirsting for its wine, Solon Maurel will hold forth its poisoned chalice.

Feed on its sweets, say his lips. Drink of its wine, say his eyes. The Dreggs woman's prophecy is at hand.

"A new man in your life. A fatal influence."

I, too, am clairvoyant to-night. I read on the wall in letters of blood: "Love me, hate me, lose me, yet love me, Lenoir!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE BEGINNING OF OUR FOLLY.

FRIDAY is to me the most lucky of days. I gamble more successfully on that than on any other day. To me there are no "Black Fridays." The most potent events of life have also happened then. I thought of this circumstance through all the glorious sunbright day, while with feverish interest I watched the tape or drove alone in Central Park.

Strange emotions moved me. Though most social of women I craved solitude to-day—the solitude of the swaying throng to one alone in its midst.

I refused to take Heloise with me on the drive. I wanted to lounge in my carriage and think of Solon Maurel.

Albert Vane calls Maurel a gambler. Has he wealth or poverty? I mused, yet cared but little.

I longed again for the *tendresse* of that marvellous smile. I sighed to color and pale beneath the glance of those fathomless eyes.

My mood was an exaltation of passion, ere passion had begun.

My nature is to plunge, not creep, to my doom.

The winter afternoon was as balmy as spring.

The blue of the sky, the gold of the sunshine, the glitter of the gayly-dressed crowd I always shall recall. In the midst of this charming scene the worst forces of my nature worked.

I had longed for love as monarchs long for power. I had craved its sweetness as women crave rare gems. I had prayed for its divine fire as a priest pleads for the pardon of a sin. Would my desires be realized, my dreams fulfilled, in this new and sudden frenzy for a man whose eyes had looked for a little while into mine?

Is this the potent, material influence which is felt by some women always, and by others never?

I drove long in the fading sunshine, until the air grew chill; then I came home, to find some Jacqueminots with the compliments of Albert Vane, and a large bunch of violets from Bridgman's bearing the card of Solon Maurel. Was my fancy for this flower already known to him, as to half the gay world of New York, or did he divine my wishes?

Far back in the past I had worn fresh violets each day during a brief, restless affair of the heart. The blonde, blue-eyed lover who sent them died suddenly while on a pleasure-trip to the city of the Golden Gate. Mayhap his memory, treasured above the din and folly of my life, lends sweeter perfume to the violets which I wear.

We were six at dinner. The other guests were Mrs. Caton and Harry Sinclair.

For a *petite* woman, Mrs. Caton's figure is perfect.

She is piquant, clever and full of repartee. A most desirable dinner-guest. Mrs. Caton, with the crispness of youth in face and manner, has the heavy heart of financial disappointment.

Married young, to the son of a noted millionaire, she knew only the flowers of life until desperate business failures struck their thorns deeply into her heart. Husband, money, and hope were swept out with the tide of disaster.

With the spirit characteristic of her sex, who more often than men rise superior to a financial blow, this plucky little woman swallowed her pride and sought to retrieve her fortunes in a "smart" business venture.

Ill-luck, alas, following her like a merciless doom, accentuated by her faith in those associated with her, turned this seemingly brilliant success into dire failure. The woman in this case was the victim of the man. It might have been called "the man in the case." However, the wreckage was absolute.

Mrs. Caton delighted Albert Vane with her *risqué* stories between courses at dinner.

"I met old Mr. Witherbee at a *musicale* the other night," she said, "and asking him to have a punch with me, he declared that he never drank. 'What *are* your vices?' I asked.

"'Only women,' the old reprobate confided, 'but it is difficult now to find anything that is pleasing among women. I have no morals, but I *am* fastidious."

"'It is easier to be moral and not fastidious,' I declared."

Another of Mrs. Caton's stories was on Mrs. Daring, a woman equally at home in court or in cottage, who can entrance a dinner-party with her wit.

Going at noon to the chambers of a society man, Mrs. Daring was informed by his valet that Mr. Ray was out. Hearing his voice through a partly open door, the visitor insisted that her call was on important business, and pushing aside the frowning valet, Mrs. Daring rushed into the front salon in time to catch the familiar voice of a woman of the smart set in the adjoining chamber.

"Mrs. Reckless is ahead of me this morning. It doesn't often happen; but the heart lends swiftness to the feet," said Mrs. Daring, with a tantalizing smile to the young society swell who, for a brief space, had worshipped at her shrine.

The story leaked out, through the antagonism of the women. Of course it did not come from young Ray. A man's stories are on others, not on himself. A woman often betrays her escapades to her dearest friend.

"Why so pensive, Miss Neville?" the widow jokingly asked Heloise during a pause in the badinage. "Are you, or have you been, in love?"

"I have been in love several times," was the girl's frank admission.

"Were you happy?"

"Yes," Heloise smiled.

"Then you were not in love," Mrs. Caton decided.

The pretty widow, drifting into metaphysics, asked if we believed in platonics between two emotional natures.

"No; there must be love or nothing," I declared. "Passion cries out for passion. A touch of the hand, a glance of the eye kindles its flame. Physical contact is the match which ignites love."

Mrs. Caton advanced the theory that man does not receive as much pleasure from several intrigues as from one real love.

"But he escapes more pain," I moralized. "The butterfly flitting from flower to flower draws sweetness and no poison in its ephemeral existence. The lonely bird, singing a dirge for its dead mate, may die of what we human beings call a heart-break."

Comparing the brilliant widow and Heloise, I decided that in a race for the heart of a flippant man, the girl had the likeliest chance. Hers is the golden charm of youth.

A winsome blonde, with big blue eyes, like old Delft, recently remarked, in my presence, that she would not appreciate love for which beauty was the sole magnet.

"It dies suddenly as it was born," she wisely said.

This little beauty, once a stage favorite, sits in her pretty apartment and watches her husband write plays and novels. I hear that the lover husband is already plucking the leaves from a new rose, brushing the bloom from a new fancy.

"Is there a true man in this whirlpool of Metropolitan life?"

The amber eyes of Solon Maurel darkened in the soft candle-light as he leaned towards me, and I felt the pressure of his arm against mine.

I had taken but little wine, yet the room swam before me. My bosom rose and fell, my heart fluttered like a caged bird, my hand grew cold, and the fire of desire and the chill of despair seemed at once to burn and freeze my blood.

Strangely my will was slipping from me beneath the thraldom of those unholy eyes.

Later, Maurel and I wandered off to a remote corner of the drawing-room.

Bending his face close to mine he whispered, "Could you love me?"

This was the beginning of our folly. A kiss was the baptism of our swift passion, resistless as the rushing forces of nature, implacable and eternal as fate.

CHAPTER X.

LENOIR DABBLES IN STOCKS.

A MESSAGE at the telephone summoned me this morning to the offices of Messrs. Bull & Bear.

Heloise, in a smart tailor gown and English walking hat, looked in my apartment, as I was making my toilet.

"Let me accompany you," she begged.

I feel less compunctions of conscience about bringing this girl and Albert Vane together since the fancy for Solon Maurel has taken possession of me.

A sudden passion like this inclines one to drag women down to the same moral plane. Only when its ashes have smothered its fires, do we warn others against its fatal flame.

A week ago I wanted to save Heloise. Now, I feel like letting her play her own little game with fate. So I granted her request, and together we went to the broker's, and delighted the heart and brought a sunny smile to the *débonnaire* face of Albert Vane.

"Your pet stock is breaking, as I thought it would. "Chicago is selling heavily," said Vane to me. "Shall we short it? This is my judgment. I warned you against women's points."

"I admit, Mr. Vane, that your knowledge and judgment of women's points are superior to mine. Indeed they are said to be unsurpassed."

Throwing back his head the broker laughed and showed his fine teeth, the greatest charm of his face for me.

"Vane's lips were made for kissing," I thought, and wondered if the same idea came to the girl, for her face wore its most seductive smile.

Had I not already realized the animal instinct that predominated her nature, the hungry look in her eyes would have betrayed it then.

Albert Vane saw it too, and a smile of triumph played around his full, crimson lips.

The youth and lusciousness of the girl appealed to him, as would that of a pretty shop-girl or a modiste's model. What he loves is passion and power over women the triumph of *his* physical nature over *theirs*. The flesh, always the flesh, not the head, nor heart, nor soul.

Heloise will suit Albert Vane.

I think the broker's conceit as to his judgment influenced mine against following his advice to short the stock. I told him to buy on declines. I also asked him to buy a hundred sugar.

"More dynamite," he hesitated.

I insisted, and the sugar was purchased.

"The industrials are good enough for me," I declared "I like the excitement of stocks that are on the jump."

"Indulge another form of excitement. I do not wish you to lose money, Lenoir," Vane said, with a dramatic glance at me.

Heloise caught the look, and her face flushed.

"The girl is already in love with the man," I decided.

To relieve the strain of the situation, I told Vane a story of a most proper woman, who that morning had said to me that her husband knew only good women, such women as he would not hesitate to have her receive. I added that I had recently seen a sketch of Gibson's sent by this man to a woman who was in the habit of dining with him and wearing his flowers. A good enough woman, no doubt, but the circumstances did not quite justify the wife's faith.

"Women are happy only when deceived," said Vane. "I often marvel at their impatience to ferret out the truth regarding their lovers and husbands. It makes them miserable."

I cited the case of a clever woman who declares that she prefers the excitement of unhappiness to the stagnation of blind, peaceful faith.

"Is it this spirit which moves you to select the most dangerous stocks on the list for your operations, and the most dangerous men for your lovers?" the broker laughingly asked.

By a coincidence the card of Solon Maurel was brought in to Albert Vane.

"This is pertinent to our little moral decision,"

Vane laughed, handing me the card. "Shall the Frenchman join us?"

"Certainly," I replied, my heart giving a great bound of delight.

Why did I flush like a girl with her first lover, as the hand of Solon Maurel touched mine and I felt its warmth through my glove?

I am neither romantic nor susceptible, yet this man's personality intoxicates me.

His greeting to Heloise lacked the warmth of his manner to me.

Again the contrast between the two men. Albert Vane plays with his victims by theatric effect. His *rôle* is to excite jealousy in one, by admiration of the other. This is commonplace and incongruous with the man possessing genuine power over women.

Vane, though of nearly equal age with the Frenchman, lacks his *finesse* and wisdom with women. The broker, while possessing quite as wining a personality, could not hold women's fancy as Solon Maurel has done in his brilliant, reckless, wandering career.

It is the deadly charm of fascination which in either sex is fatal.

After arranging to dine at Delmonico's and go to Palmer's Theatre with Maurel and Vane that evening, Heloise and I said *au revoir* and went for a stroll in the glorious sunshine up Fifth Avenue.

Meeting an heiress about to make a brilliant foreign alliance, Heloise commented that she would not want to pay his price for a title and ruined estate.

"No matter," I told the girl; "a woman might as well pay for a man before marriage as afterward. She knows his price then; later, she cannot count upon it."

I should not instill these cynical ideas into a young head, but I have lived in Paris where the *grisette* often divides her earnings with her student lover. She has a likelier show of happiness than the queen of *cocottes*, playing havoc with a prince's millions.

"American women buy titles, but not lovers," moralized the girl.

Heloise has much to learn. She must pay for her own lessons in life.

Maurel was brilliant to-night, but hard. Albert Vane whispered to me that the Frenchman had been gambling and had lost heavily.

His face was colorless, his eyes expressionless, his voice weary.

We sipped "*Parfait d'amour*" after champagne at supper. Maurel held the cordial up to the light until its colorings gleamed like fire; then, resting his eyes on mine, he cynically laughed.

"Does perfect love exist, except in dreams?" he wonderingly mused.

The coldness of his mood chilled the fever of my new-born passion.

"There is no real love in the heart of man, save for himself," I answered.

To Solon Maurel there is but one God—himself. Upon the fire he kindles he throws the ice of indif-

ference. This may be part of his method in holding a fancy once won.

Ah, he knows woman well: give her a caress to-day, a mere shake of the hand to-morrow.

What use has this Frenchman for me?

Ever and again comes this question to the mind of a woman past earliest youth.

Youth is love's comedy. Maturity, its melodrama. Age, its tragedy.

When the words "I love you" from a man's lips cease to fall on a woman's ears, she has already a tragedy in her heart.

Maurel is a gambler. What hope can a woman have to usurp the sway of the sweet enslaver—Chance?

Ah! through his passions will I hold him, and tear this brazen goddess from her dominion in his heart.

CHAPTER XI.

MONEYBAGS TO THE RESCUE.

THAT woman's tip was wrong. Albert Vane was right regarding this stock. I believe the real winner coppers all information he gets on Wall Street. I dare not short the stock, knowing the powerful interests that have been accumulating it. Insiders of the old company are selling. It looks as if all parties were getting out.

I must consult old Moneybags. I will don my most becoming frock and go down to his office. A better plan would be to get the old Wellington of the street to dine with me here. I can influence him more over my own deviled almonds and wine than in his cheerless office.

The thin-haired, keen-eyed old chap whose wealth has won him first place in society's ranks likes a turn in Bohemia as well. In an opera-box the man looks like a mummy, but with a party of kindred souls he really is amusing, with his scandals of the upper set.

Moneybags has great craving, but no love for the world into which wealth has given him the password. His is the success of gold, not of merit.

The women of his set are no more sacred to him than is the actress of the latest *mésalliance* or the woman whose favors he purchases.

Nature gave to this man only brains and acuteness to play upon the cupidity of mankind. He will always be a sycophant and follower, not a leader. I hold his fancy by my intolerance of his set, and gratify his vanity with my compliments of his financial skill.

Moneybags' town and seashore palaces are monuments to his success. He is one of the many brazen images at whose shrine the world bends its knee. Moneybags shall come to me to-night. I will get him on the 'phone, and, in shop-girl parlance, "jolly him up a bit."

The telephone is quite enough to ruin one's temper. It always is so busy that it suggests the idea of the girl at the other end being always idle. Battles with the manager over the wire are useless. He sticks to his girl. A monopoly is a catastrophe in the business world.

Finally, after the stock had dropped a point, I got Moneybags' number.

"Buy like the devil now," he advised, with more force than civility.

"I cannot buy like the devil," I returned. "I haven't his power nor yours."

Moneybags opened his heart, and agreed to carry two hundred shares, giving me the profits and standing the loss.

I 'phoned to Albert Vane.

"Any points?" Vane questioned.

I satisfied him with the assurance that Moneybags was a heavy purchaser.

"That man always is bullish and occasionally gets left," Vane returned.

Moneybags could not dine with me, but he danced in before going to the Patriarchs. He explained that he must show up there; and he read me a lecture on speculation. It was the same old story about not playing points, and with practical illustrations.

I offered the old gentleman a whisky and soda, and he took my hand in his clammy palm and turned my rings about on my fingers.

"I like you, Lenoir," he said, fastening upon me his twinkling eyes, that remind me of two little fiends. "If you *must* play this game, I will tell you the only cards that will beat it. They are money, patience, and pluck. I judge that you have no money to lose; you give too much to your tailor. You are too emotional to be patient, but you are plucky."

My guest drew nearer till his face was close to mine. The thought of Maurel came to me. I loathed myself then. I think I despised all the world while the thin, bloodless lips lingered on mine.

"Nothing for nothing," is the creed of man; and Moneybags won his reward.

CHAPTER XII.

WILL MY HEART BREAK AS WELL?

MORE violets from Solon Maurel! Also a little note says he will call at four o'clock, if I will receive him.

I have cards for two teas and a *musicale* to-day. These affairs bore me, now. I want only Maurel. He shall come to me. I will link my life with his, for good or for evil!

The minister says "For better, for worse." Isn't it usually for worse? Wits claim that the woman is given away, but the man is sold. This admits of reversion.

Maurel and I will not go in for marriage. We could not afford to. It is a luxury for the rich. We bluffers of life have no need of fetters. We enjoy to-day, and forget on the morrow. It is touch and go, with us. We have the best of everything, food, clothes, and love. Elegance stamps us with superiority. What we cannot pay for we hang up!

This life of upper Bohemia, or, as it is termed, "the fringe of society," is one of vicissitudes, of hours grave and gay; but the worry of the morning is obliterated by the color and bloom of the night. We

wear softest laces and finest gowns. We do not follow the women of society, we lead them.

In an opera-box, every man looks at us, because, with fewer jewels to dazzle, we are usually better mannered and groomed.

Men send more flowers to the woman of society. To the woman of Bohemia they send more gems.

I was amused at the experience of a woman who posed as a great swell at an uptown hotel last winter, while her money lasted ; then she took a floor in a private house and settled down to a quiet existence. A man about town, who was noted for his affairs with pretty women, was the constant attendant of this dashing blonde during her sojourn at the hotel. He is not liberal, and always saves a supper, after the theatre, on the plea of indigestion. A coupé was at the service of his inamorata for the Play, and a victoria for the Park, until her removal to the lodging-house suite. After walking to the theatre, one evening, the little lady appealed to me to know if Mr. Chapin had lost his money. I replied, "No, but you have lost yours."

Men of this type spend money to entice women, not to hold them.

The man of heart and honor bestows favors for the pleasure it gives the recipient and himself.

Unfortunately men of this class are seldom met.

The marriage of a young author and journalist to a woman older than himself, but wealthy, gave rise to a little discussion as to their future, and the

relative power a woman wields over the man whom she purchases.

Little Buttercup, herself a bright writer and one-time friend of the man in question, declared that the man who accepts even car-fare from a woman, places himself under an obligation to her which gives her a hold upon him. The acceptance of financial favors from a woman may deaden a man's honor, but the chivalric spirit latent in his breast forces him to recognize her claim upon him, the little woman insisted.

Little Buttercup is wrong, as Mrs. Lytton, a sufferer from man's perfidy, argued. Her experience teaches that before incurring financial obligations from a woman, a man's honor and manhood are dead. His province is to give, not to accept, favors. The sense of obligation must at times oppress him, unless he has sunk to the lowest level of degradation. Instead of inspiring gratitude, it leads to hatred of his benefactress.

The woman who pays for a man's clothes, his horses, jewels, and pleasures has but little chance of his fidelity or his respect.

The more a woman costs a man, the greater is her power over him. He loves what he buys, not what is given to him!

The woman in whose favors a man revels may some day have thrown at her the thankless words: "I won you too easily."

Woman is as true as steel or as false as hell. She

loves or she hates, and heaven help the man who scorns her. She sacrifices herself or she slaughters him.

Woman is spiteful ; but man is cruel !

Once weary of a woman or attracted by a new charm or a more flattering tongue, the sweetness of the past turns to bitterness in a man's heart.

When a woman begins to reproach a man, he is already lost to her. Though pride and honor be sacrificed for his sake, the forsaken woman must endure the sting of indifference and see the eclipse of hope.

A man can be held only by his passions or his heart. Where women are concerned he is without honor !

Mrs. Lytton, in criticising a man's lack of fortune and seeming devotion at her shrine, very cleverly said : " Well, he at least has enough money to pay for his cigarettes and his infidelities."

I think Mrs. Lytton scarcely realizes the money required for these luxuries !

Albert Vane used to declare that he had no heart—only nerves. He has passions and nerves. I presume Heloise will be duped into believing he has heart. That girl acts strangely of late. She flushes at mention of Vane's name. I believe she has met him unknown to me.

Heloise is the sort of girl for afternoon appointments with men in hotel reception-rooms and restaurants. I shall run across her at the Waldorf some fine afternoon, seated at a little table, drinking cock-

tails, with one or two dudes smoking cigarettes at her side.

Albert Vane likes only cigars. He is a walking chimney. With quite young girls, like Heloise, he might smoke cigarettes, to create the impression or retain the delusion of youth.

When Vane desires to be especially attractive he wears a coat flower. He is approaching the age that scorns an *affaire* with any woman over twenty-two.

Vane desires to unfold the bud, to watch, with smiling eye and winning speech, its leaves open beneath the dew of passion's kiss. He loves to play with any feminine thing, as a cat plays with a mouse; to twist its throat and wring its heart, before destroying it. The female cat purrs and scratches. The male cat destroys its prey.

Albert Vane will not seek Heloise in marriage. His numerous matrimonial engagements have been like his stop-orders on stocks, good until cancelled.

Vane declares that he would rather go to a funeral than to a wedding.

The Dead March in Saul often follows too quickly the wedding march from Lohengrin, in life's fateful course.

Marriage is the beginning of sorrows. Death is its ending.

Maurel will soon be with me. I must put on my rose crêpe tea-gown, with its cloud of chiffon drapery and open, swinging sleeves that bare my arms to the

shoulder. I know all the arts of dress. It has such weight with men. They appreciate detail where formerly they caught only the effect.

I will not breathe a word to Maurel of my brief acquaintance with the little chorus-girl. Let the past know no resurrection.

The secret of success with men is not to recognize their histories or their weaknesses, but to humor their vices!

To criticise a man's faults is to antagonize him!

In the old days, when sweeter, purer sentiments pervaded my nature, I fancied it well, instead of humoring, to try to cure the vices of one's lover. I had aspirations for the place of the little brown woman in his life, but the world soon taught me its fatal creed of letting a man hug his vices to his heart in silence, or of myself absorbing them, to the extent of at least good-fellowship. You may criticise your enemies—but not your friends.

A young man usually insists on innocence in women; it is to him a fascinating and not as yet exploded theory; he conjures up sweet visions of the little angel who will wipe his brow, and bandage his head, and straighten out his clothes after a revel with the latest vaudeville celebrity. He returns to "the little brown woman" for repairs, after a skirmish with the battery of the scarlet woman's charms!

This type of man idealizes virtue, but follows vice, not from innate evil, but as a result of association with men and women who fire his blood with liquor,

and drain his manhood with the poison of seductive sin.

Men of maturer experience, more seared by time and folly, sometimes give "the little brown woman" a permanent situation. I doubt that I ever could have acceptably filled this position, and found real pleasure in the pressing and cleaning business.

I must look again at Maurel's picture. It holds me like his eyes. The nature is often revealed in a picture more than in the face. The artist sees beneath the fleshly mask the secrets of the soul.

A picture may be the impression of a heart interior. It tells in mute, yet forceful power the story of a life.

I once had a strong instinct against a man confirmed by his portrait. His vices and insincerity glared from the canvas and saved me from his clutches.

Neither this picture of Solon Maurel nor nature's handwriting upon his face can hold me back from him. His love, himself, I want, at any price. I am so weary of life without love!

Would we had met in the far-away past, before our hearts were riddled by fancies and hardened by care. We might have loved in the old sweet fashion of innocence and trust, and found happiness in the old sweet paths!

Elise loved this man with her senses; yet her heart broke of longing for him.

He is the one human thing I crave. Will *my* heart be broken, too?

CHAPTER XIII.

A TARGET FOR MEN.

MAUREL'S face was haggard, his eyes dull, his voice weary this afternoon. I felt that the reckless game he plays had gone against him.

"Solon, do not gamble all the time?" I begged, as I bathed his brow with lavender water to relieve his headache.

"Lenoir, I *must* gamble. It is my *one* passion," he replied, with flashing eyes.

"Your one passion?" I repeated, reproachfully, slowly kissing his lips and brow.

Fatigue left his face, and it flushed and warmed, while his heart throbbed against mine.

"Ah, Lenoir, you are love's elixir!" he murmured! and past and future were forgotten in the bliss of that hour!

Love's awakening, its realization, its death! These three phases represent the piteous tale of love and life.

The inspiration of Wagner's mighty love stories could have come only to one who had been swayed by great passions and purified by great sorrows. The awakening of Brunhilde, the dying love-song of Isolde are master-poems of the heart.

A chill crept through my blood midst the fever of my lover's kisses. He satisfies only my physical nature; he fails to reach my heart.

The world seems changed, the sunshine shadowed, the laughter of the throng less gay. The fever of excitement runs high in my veins. I have taken a potion that benumbs my senses and controls my will. I belong no longer to myself; I am wholly Maurel's.

I threw faith in man to the winds long ago; yet I want to believe in *him*, my one passion.

I desire from him no gift but his love. My name (*Lenoir*) has blackened my life; yet I would seem white in *his* eyes.

Analysis destroys love. The knife of mental dissection should not be plunged into the heart of passion.

I must blind myself to my lover's faults and try to cure his vices.

Desire burns out with the fierceness of its flame. Love of the senses usually merges into regret or detestation. This is the creed of students of love's problem. The stories of love's fiercest passions, its mightiest melodramas, its darkest tragedies contradict this belief.

Solon and I may disagree, our pathway may be clouded, but only death can part us.

My lover is vain, as all men are. He has used women more than loved them. Yet his vanity does not equal that of Albert Vane, to whom a dozen conquests mean more than one woman's love.

Is Maurel using me, too, as Vane would do? Amid the raptures of love this pitiful cry wails through my heart!

Maurel's kisses are as fire, his voice as ice. I know that from the wreck of his heart-life I get only splinters. He tosses crumbs to me. I throw my life at his feet,—I will gather these crumbs and make them into a loaf on which I will feed.

In absence, I weigh my love in the mental scales which I toss aside when we meet and our lips touch in a soft caress.

The lips of Maurel woo me with the fragrance of old wines; the tenderness of his touch sets my heart beating. I rule other men; my new lover dominates me! He asked me to give him an opal ring that I chanced to wear. I hesitated, but one look from his eyes influenced me to his bidding.

"The old superstition has been swept aside by modern materialism," Maurel claimed, with that wretched, hard little laugh he sometimes gives. "The stone is quite a fad now. It may change luck, Lenoir. It may be my mascot, as you are, my sweetheart."

Maurel got the fiery gem, with its lurid lights, that remind me of a restless human soul. It is like Maurel's eyes: now burning with passion, now cold with satiety.

There is enough superstition and romance left amid the débris of my faiths to make the opal a thing of dread to me.

"This is the finest specimen of the Hungarian

which I have seen, and the diamonds are perfect," my lover said, measuring its value against its sentiment, as he slipped the gleaming thing upon his finger, and, stooping, drew me to his embrace.

Thus was our love compact sealed.

I told Solon of old Moneybags' promise to carry stock for me. He smiled, rather quizzically, but entered no protest.

"You might use the old man to better purpose than for a few hundred shares, my dear," he suggested.

A little devil leapt into my heart, and I told Maurel that old Moneybags had given me the opal for a birthday remembrance.

"Then it will indeed bring good luck to me," he laughed. "Anything bought or bestowed by a man of Moneybags' success *must* win."

Maurel is unfortunate in speculation. He plays the pyramid game. He buys on profits. To make or to break is the gambler's spirit. He buys on eighths and quarters, up, with no stops on.

"Limit your losses, but let your profits run," is the true way to beat the famous game of "the street."

Heloise has just been here to bid me good-night. She wants to know why I write so much, late at night.

"I am recording your life and mine," I said.

"I shall furnish good material," the girl declared. "I am out for a lark!"

Taking her face between my hands and drawing

her beneath the light of the lamp I looked into her eyes. She gazed at me unflinchingly and broke into a merry laugh. The girl is all right, *as yet.*

"You have met Albert Vane, alone?"

"I will not deceive you, Lenoir. I have met Mr. Vane in the afternoon at the Waldorf. We drank some wine and had a salad."

"What else happened?"

"We took a stroll up the Avenue. He asked me to go to the theatre, some evening this week, and said he would call on me, after three, any day I would appoint, when you would *not* be at home. I dare say he thinks you might look in my apartment."

To my query if he made love to her, Heloise said: "Not more than other men would."

Heloise is a target for men. The girl possesses the charm of *diablerie.* She must marry early in life.

"I think I was born bad," she declared. "I enjoy *risque* stories and immoral books."

I told her that some day she would meet a man who would not spare her, and the likeliest one to yield to the temptation which she would force upon him would be Albert Vane.

CHAPTER XIV.

"BE MY MASCOT, LENOIR."

My Wall Street outlook brightens. I have a tip to sell sugar. My informant makes no mistake. I will go down to Albert Vane's office. I dare not trust to the telephone in this deal. I shall not let Vane know my business.

Is any man a real friend to a woman? Is not he always her lover or nothing?

I am weary, after the excitement of the morning. I sold sugar against Vane's judgment, but my tip satisfied me that my position was the correct one. The stock sky-rocketed up two points, held steady, then reacted and soared again. On each upward turn I sold more. At one o'clock the street dropped to the situation, and rapidly as it had advanced, the stock broke three points. Patience and pluck had made one thousand dollars for me. I played a sure winner in the great Wall Street race.

Albert Vane complimented my cleverness, while we celebrated my victory in champagne.

A man worships at the shrine of a successful woman, and holds aloof from one that fails.

In misfortune, woman is a better friend to woman

than the man who has enjoyed her favors and been the slave of her brighter hours.

Vane asked me to let him call to-morrow afternoon. I presume he wants to make love to my money. I do not think he could feel more than a passing infatuation for any woman. I have neither time nor desire for an entanglement with this man.

Love and business do not accord. The man of a woman's heart must not handle her dollars.

Maurel will call to-night. Vane will tell him of my success, and Solon will seek me. If I but possessed the vanity that once was mine! I would give my heart not to weigh men and find them wanting! Would that I were Heloise, that vapid, gushing, reckless creature, who is painting in vivid coloring the great canvas of her life!

I no longer love the girl. Her velvety touch has ceased to soothe me, her rippling laughter no more awakens echoes of the heart-music of other days.

Would that Heloise's mental vision could see the pall of the future slowly falling on the brightness of the present.

The girl has the same temperament as Vane. Neither nature is great enough to suffer much, yet even the lightest heart must know a brief regret.

I am singularly weary to-night. I will drink a bit of brandy and light my cigarette, my dainty cigarette, that has so often consoled me. In its blue

smoke I see the cloud-pictures of my old, sweet loves. I recall the merry past, with its music and flowers, its fêtes and its follies. It brings back the smiling face of my dead love and the days that were a dream under the sunny skies of France, when we drove and danced in the pleasure whirl of Paris.

We realize what happiness means when it is forever lost.

I loved Herbert Lee with the best that was in me. I long for Solon Maurel with the fiercest and worst passions of my nature!

I am not happy with him; yet I cannot exist apart from him!

I have drunk an opium-drugged love-philter. It affects me like the morphia I used to take to deaden pain. I gave up the wicked stuff before it controlled my nature. No form of vice has heretofore subjected my will, but this passion for Maurel is like the opium-habit that kills the soul.

I must sip again and again the poisoned draught of Maurel's fatal love. Lenoir, are you mad? Cannot you save yourself?

I talked lately with a little woman for whom the world would have only harsh judgment. She bluffs the game of life. Her flashing dark eyes hold no tears; her trained voice betrays no sorrow. Fortune's wheel turned against her. The gorgeousness and pomp of her past serve but to shadow the hard routine of her life now. As she works and waits for the better time coming, she sobs not, but sings;

yet the song is like a dirge and hope darkens with despair.

From her toilet table, a man's pictured face looks into hers. The love-light has left his eyes, the old tenderness is dead in his heart, the woman is all alone now with her past.

"Do you still love him?" I questioned her, in one of her cynical hours, when her poor little heart was making its hardest effort to be brave.

"I love him so well that were his millions lost I would work for him," she said.

As I read my heart, to-night, I would give all my gems rather than lose my new lover from my life. The gems recalling the generosity of the man who until now was my life's one love I would lay at the feet of him who will be my life's last love.

Who shall judge a woman's heart or measure the greatness of her sacrifices?

Even the lowest form of her passion places her above the average heartless woman of fashion, whose soul lies in her chiffons and flowers.

"Man falls through his passions, woman through her affections!" a brilliant journalist declared, during one of our erotic conversations.

I disagreed with him. The twentieth-century woman, lapped in luxury, bathed in wine, breathing the incense of flattery and the atmosphere of license, is likeliest to be swayed by passion and held by the affection that is its offspring.

Passion is a perpetual bond or an eternal separation.

I like the audacity and the ambition of this young man of the press, with the *bonhomie* of Bohemia and the culture of society.

Ellis Rosseau asked me, the other night, the cause of my sweetness to this blonde boy, as we chatted in Little Buttercup's sitting-room.

I told him I was only keeping my hand in. I have quite a soft spot in my heart for this reckless, restless man of the Press, who detests the work that pays for his dinners. Would I were rich that I might divide my gold with a few of the good comrades of the world. Ah, you wretched millionaires, piling up your money and your sorrows; I wish that you could realize, in your empty lives the hearty pleasure of doing good."

* * * * *

My lover has been and gone. My mirror reflects a new line in my face, a new shadow in my eyes. Maurel was moody and brilliant by turns, to-night. He kissed me with the fever of passion and pushed me from him with the lassitude of *ennui*. These changeful moods enchain my fancy in a hopeless spell.

"Was Vane ever your lover?" Maurel questioned, as he held my hands and searched my heart with those basilisk eyes that would crush a lie on my lips.

"Are you jealous of Vane?" I asked, half hoping an acknowledgment.

"No; I only wondered if you could resist him. To me he is most alluring. With women I should imagine him to be a winner, always."

The woman who yields to a man's passion must expect to be considered by him vulnerable to others. This is the one respect in which man's vanity does not reign supreme.

The woman who retains her purity with her lover is immaculate, in his eyes, with all men.

Between the sweetness of my lover's kisses, I tasted the poison of his bitter heart. This sort of relation can give no lasting happiness.

"Solon, tell me why you make me happy only to make me wretched again?" I asked.

"Because, Lenoir, I am wretched myself. I am the slave of a habit that darkens my life. All hell might be paved with my vows to quit gaming, yet I go ever on in the feverish hope of winning back my lost gold.

"Were you always a gambler?" I asked.

"It was in my blood, dear," he replied. "My father blew out his brains at Monte Carlo, after losing the fortune that should have been mine. I went there, a boy of nineteen, with the fire of youth and hope in my veins. To-night, after years of success and defeat, with gold piled high at my side, until the bank shut down on my play, and with poverty holding me in its deadly throes, with the luxury and radiance of one month followed by the gloom of the next, I have reached the stage of despair. Be my Mascot, Lenoir, woo back sweet fortune to my side. We will go together to Paris, the only place to live. You

shall have the jewels of an empress and dazzle all France with your splendor."

Maurel's eyes shone like stars, his lips wooed me with their soft caress, his arms clasped me in a vise-like hold. In that moment I would have given my life for his.

"Solon," I said, "I won to-day. Take the money and try the game, once more. I feel that it will win. It is love money. It comes from my heart."

I gave my lover a check. I kissed his brow softly, with my passion all dead.

A shadow fell between us; but we drank in the rich, ruby wine of France, to my lover's success with my gold.

CHAPTER XV.

HELOISE IS HOPELESS.

I HAVE a new hold on Maurel. He won three thousand dollars last night, and gave me this turquoise ring to-day. I shall never part with it. The stone brings good fortune and pleasure to me. Fred Manton's birthday gift brought me Maurel, which means love and happiness.

We drive at four, this afternoon; we dine at the Waldorf, at seven. Then we will have a box at Koster's. I love a vaudeville.

Mrs. Willis, that little black-eyed friend, who hates me and affects the pose of society, went in a box party to Koster's and found the show too dull. She declared she neither heard nor saw anything improper.

It is difficult to convince narrow-minded persons that the performance at Koster's is reputable, that men take their wives and sweethearts to this vaudeville, and that we have not as yet compassed the point of indecency at a music hall, to which a woman of any pretence to respectability may go.

We have not reached the limit of the Alhambra or the Empire. Pretty bar-maids do not flirt with

our men nor seduce them from our sides. Women do not stagger about the lobbies, making dates with any strange man who may fall beneath the spell of their haggard charms.

The vilest American female scarcely equals the average London music-hall frequenter or the *cocotte* of the *Jardin de Paris*.

The rosebud of society or the married belle gives a skirt dance in the Fifth Avenue studio of an artist, and the leaders of the smart set entertain their guests with the flesh tints and shapely limbs of their champion beauties in the poses of living pictures.

Given time, the world of Bohemia will attain the licence of the world of high fashion, whose women have set up smoking-rooms, hung with Egyptian stuffs and scattered about with little tables loaded with smoking paraphernalia. The drawers of these tables contain Egyptian cigarettes stamped in golden letters with the name and compliments of the hostess, Fred Manton sent me five hundred from the Broadway shop that furnishes them to the *grande dames* of the former four hundred, now dwindled, alas, to one hundred and fifty, and gradually decreasing, until their memory will soon have become but a burlesque.

Semi-society really shocks me at times. I took Heloise calling last week on a lot of people I thought might amuse her. I regretted not having left her at home. She so readily absorbs evil. At the Savoy we were shown into Mrs. Lester's splendid Louis XV. drawing-room, to find, amid half a dozen emi-

nently proper guests, Mrs. Lester posed on one foot, with flushed face and vacant stare. She was obsequious to me and gurgled at Heloise. Attempting to present the girl to her other guests, she called her by her first name and mentioned me as her dear Madame Lenoir. Seeing that our hostess was quite exhilarated, I gave Heloise a glance to decline her proferred hospitality and hastily beat a retreat from the scene, before the woman's husband and child might dawn upon it.

Thinking this a rare case, I read the girl a lecture on the folly of drinking with one's guests, on one's day at home. Then we drove further up the Avenue to the tasteful residence of a most critical woman, whose pose is highly moral and intellectual. Madame, in jetted gauze and antique jewels, her face flashing smiles, sailed in from the furthest room of the suite, to welcome us.

As this woman's social code is flawless, I marvelled that she had for a moment been allured from her standpoint in the front drawing-room. Taking us by the hand and laughing hysterically she dragged us into the punch-room. "We have struck another jag," I mused, sipping the famous rose punch which had made our hostess so vivacious. As several other guests showed signs of its insinuating effect, we took our leave, and I made no comments on society, as Heloise and I drove home in the chill, damp dusk.

* * * * *

We had a beautiful time to-night. I was happy with my lover, and Heloise seemed utterly under the spell of Albert Vane's good looks and flattering tongue.

As the girl kissed me good-night, just before I donned this fleecy robe in which I write, she stuck a rose in my breast, and, stooping, kissed my flesh.

Heloise is dainty and seductive. I marvel that Maurel does not love her. Were I a man, my purse and my heart would be hers.

"You love Solon," she purred, between her soft kisses. "I am pleased, Lenoir that you *do* love. Passion is the sweetest thing in life, except Maillard's chocolates and Ruinart champagne."

Her eyes had the glitter of a tigress, her lips were crimson as the roses she wore. Her arms tightened about my neck, her kisses rained on my throat and shoulders, until, pushing her from me I sent her off to bed, without the usual glass of wine and parting cigarette.

Heloise is hopeless!

CHAPTER XVI.

WOMAN AT THE TAPE.

It is a mistake to suppose that stock speculation is confined to men. A large number of women gamble in stocks. Some are successful.

Upper Broadway is lined with branch offices where women trade. The dashing manager of one of these offices declares that he does not seek female custom; yet a woman's order is welcome and she is graciously received. The male customers are not pleased at her presence. Men are not desirous that women win in any of life's games. The clever woman does not crave woman's rights; she is satisfied with man's.

This cosy office has a *clientele* of young and somewhat showy women who are guided by the judgment of the manager. At times he gets rattled with the profusion of orders, the rapidity of fluctuations and the complaints of his fair *clientele*. He must be equally smooth of brow and suave of speech to the boarding-house mistress and to the blonde belle. Like the policeman's, his life is "not a happy one." The woman dealing in ten shares demands more attention than the woman trading in one hundred. The former fights to save an eighth commission,

while the latter tosses over a stock, regardless of loss, when she discerns a soft spot in the market.

Allured by the glittering signs indicating this office, the twentieth century woman wanders within and barters her gems, before discovering that she has attempted to play a game to which roulette and faro are as nothing.

In one of these fine offices two spirits rule. One is blonde, the other is dark. The former is bullish, the latter sells stocks always. The blonde is young, soft of manner and speech. Hope rules in his breast. Life has favored him with success. He has had no dark hours, no truant loves. The bear of the great business concern has lost a fortune, and with it hope. Following the judgment of either leader, the client often loses.

To this office women flock. All day they watch on the big board the record of the manipulations of the street. Home is neglected. Fashion takes second place. Husbands, children, lovers are forgotten in the pursuit of illusive wealth.

These places are as Monte Carlo is to France, the plague spots of a nation.

A loser in this place recently declared her intention of taking to the church in the end. How eagerly we offer God the refuse of our lives! When earth fails and human loves and human hopes are dead, we turn to heaven for solace. This phase of human nature would indicate that the great unknown must hold the potion that gives eternal rest.

I studied the types in this centre of speculation. One woman was gray and thin of hair, haggard of face, wistful of eye. She feverishly watched the tape, as though her soul's salvation hung on the next fluctuation. Her story is interesting. Years ago she accumulated a fortune through the advice of the shrewdest man ever known in commercial or speculative centres—the man whose axiom was, " Don't buy what you can't pay for, nor sell what you haven't got."

After this man's death the woman ran her deals on her own judgment, and quickly her newly-acquired wealth melted. From ten until three each day, she haunts the offices of various brokers ; then she returns to her cheerless home.

One morning a finely gowned woman of forty-five entered an uptown office and eagerly scanned the gossip and watched the stock fluctuations. She spoke not, nor smiled at the comments of other customers. Silently she wrote her orders. Not a muscle moved in her face not a shadow darkened her eyes, as the game went on. I wondered whether or not she won. The following morning a sensational daily recorded the death of a woman of forty-five, a blonde exquisitely dressed, a character known at the races and in the upper sporting circles of New York. Her attempt to keep a boarding-house had failed. She then let lodgings to young women living alone. She moved from place to place as though pursued by the spirit of doom. Her life was a string of adven-

tures, a complication of regrets, ending in ruin and suicide. She was the woman I had seen at the tape. Women usually buy after a big rise and sell on a reaction. It requires nerve to buy stocks at the bottom and sell them at the top. The broker wins by coppering his sheet. He realizes that his customers usually are in error. Hence he takes stocks off of their hands and builds a snug home and sails in a trim little yacht, while his clients live about in spots, and take their outings on Coney Island boats.

The women of the tape are posted on current events, and their opinions are most pronounced. Occasionally they win large sums, but in the end the bank swallows up their profits.

The saddest and freakiest looking among these female speculators have long since been reduced to ten-share operators. Their gowns are seedy, their hair dishevelled, their youth dead.

Women who speculate in this way usually have had some little career, humble though it be. They are not always bad, but simply misguided. The fever of Wall Street thins their blood and reduces their flesh and burns out all the fire from their hearts. They no longer love mankind, but carp upon the treachery and ingratitude of human nature. Instead of sipping life's ambrosia, they have tasted its wormwood. Their lives are narrow and colorless. They always carry their tubs about with them, forgetting that could Diogenes have left his, he would no longer have been a cynic.

With gold for one's god and the milk of human kindness soured by life's sudden storms, comes the tendency to decry human nature.

Extremes of any emotion or indulgence of any vice are followed by reactions and collapse.

Among the devotees of the street are two women of fair fame, once rich and occupying good social position. The beginning of their financial downfall was friendship with a leader of the street, one prominent in great deals, who has baffled, defeated and surmounted fortune several times in his mercurial career.

Lacking the nerve, persistency and phenomenal luck of this man, his humble imitators have followed his lead as a soldier follows his chief. They have dropped out of the line of march, heartsore and weary, while the general on his dashing charger has ridden on to victory. Some day he will meet his Waterloo and sink into the obscurity whence he emanated.

Three years ago these women admirers and followers of the cleverest and most daring pool organizer of the street plunged into stocks *ad libitum*. Being sisters they bought jointly hundreds of shares and lost a fortune in a recent and memorable Wall Street smash, precipitated by the collapse of a rotten and manipulated security, which paid its dividends from its capital, and hurled thousands into ruin and want. High on the waves of prosperity ride its leaders, now, while the cursing victims are scattered through

the land. These two sisters bucked the game until it led them from splendid hotels, into side street apartments.

Forever their cry was stocks ; their infatuation was the kaleidoscopic, bewildering maze of Wall Street. From five hundred share traders, they dwindled to one hundred, then to fifty, then to ten. Now they sit all the morning in an office with other women speculators and back and fill on fractions, with nerve gone and confidence destroyed. The tragedy of their lives is nearly completed. The curtain will soon ring down !

In upper Broadway is a place exclusively for ladies, with a board, a boy, a ticker and a manageress at their service. The boast of this place is its legitimacy. Its news flashes direct from the main office of a large Wall Street firm. There is also a connection with the Consolidated, for trading in fractional lots. The lady manager is *au fait* on Wall Street, having made money in deals and keeping *au courant* of the arteries of speculation. Her best judgment is freely given, when desired, but not thrust upon customers, to their discomfiture and loss.

Women of the better class frequent this quiet office and often a winning is made by them. The woman at the helm, has the head of a dozen men and the big heart of an honest woman.

The most exclusive uptown office is also presided over by a woman. The board records the changes in stocks, as the dial of a clock indicates the hours,

but no news is to be scanned within this gorgeous place. Its motto is silence; its creed is success. A winning is assured those who entrust a margin to the somewhat mysterious power behind the throne.

No sign betrays the place. Access is only to the initiated. This game is played on private information. Whatever move the magnates of Wall Street make, a similar move is made for you. Your money is not risked with an individual not responsible, but on information so accurate that loss seems impossible.

This charming headquarters of chance, with its soft rugs and dainty belongings, its tempting luncheons and sparkling wines, allures the favored few into roseate dreams of fortune's fairest blessings.

Women are natural gamblers as the European gaming places prove, with their reckless, restless, gayly-dressed throngs, comprising the butterflies of pleasure's *risque* set and the *mondaines* of the most brilliant cities of the world.

Women, while more nervous and impatient, are really less reckless than men. They accept their fate more philosophically, and less frequently blow out their brains under the silvery moon, beside the glistening sea that washes the shores upon which stands the greatest gambling palace of the world.

Defeat and poverty are accepted by the women of our time with the resignation that in sunshine or in storms stamps them, even at their worst, as superior to mankind.

CHAPTER XVII.

LENOIR'S MENTAL CONFLICT.

MAUREL sent me a great bunch of violets to-day. He will come to me to-night. He always seeks me when I win!

Why does my passion for this man burn out my life?

The snow that crowns an Alpine summit is not colder than his heart, the edelweiss is not harder to pluck than the flower of his love. Yet his touch scorches my flesh like lava that burns on Vesuvius's fiery bed!

I am weary of Life's battle. It leads but to defeat. Heart-worn and brain-tired, when the Great Conqueror comes, we silently fold our hands and submit to his sway!

Ah, Solon Maurel, at once my life's charm and its sorrow, why did you come to me as a blessing and as a curse?

Why did nature give me a heart to drag through life's storms and burn out its fires upon the altar of its most unhallowed temples?

Could I have had one chance to grasp and cling to! I have set up brazen images for gods. I have wan-

dered through the world's pleasure fields and seen its daisies droop, its roses die. The perfume has sweetened my soul, the thorns have pierced my flesh.

Why is it that some women were born to do good and some to do evil?

Maurel does not love me! He does not make me happy! My blood runs cold with the shadow that the future casts upon my life.

I might love a good and honest man. I might become a true and honest woman, were I given half a chance.

This strange, hypnotic spell that my lover casts upon me holds me with the iron grasp of doom.

In these violets I breathe the fragrance of Maurel's kisses. I feel his passionate caress. The money that I win will go to feed his insatiate thirst for gaming.

What is love but a dream; its fulfilment a regret? What is success but the pursuit of a shadow?

We work, we wait, we hope and die. Ah! the solace of love. It is the heart's mainspring without which the machinery is silent.

Hope is the religion and the salvation of the world!

Some clever, yet rather disappointed women attempted a revision of the Bible, their criticism being that woman lacks prominence in its pages; that having been formed from the rib of a man, she is not complete as though created at once and on an equality with him; that Adam was the father of the human

race and Eve was only the woman who bore his sons. The woman weak and faltering, listened to the serpent and tempted Adam in her turn to eat of the forbidden fruit. Had the woman not listened and fallen the human race would have known no sin. The idyllic charm of Eden would have been eternal.

The claim is that upon woman's weak shoulders rests the sins of the world.

These progressive women of the age would give to their sex scope and power and recognition beyond that of man. They would give us more Magdalens and fewer Judases, forgetting that the blackest picture which the artists of the Scriptures painted was that of the Lord's Supper, to which only men sat down; that the deepest treachery which darkens the story of the centuries was perpetrated by a man, and that the healing balm of love and of hope was administered by the soft hand and the loving heart of a woman follower of Christ.

These carpers and would-be reorganizers of the Bible overlook the fact that the greatest liar of all history, religious or profane, was Ananias, and that, when the body of the Saviour was laid in its tomb, a woman wept beside it.

Though the fatal charm of Cleopatra drove a man mad, and the beauty of Helen incited a nation to war; though the false counsel of a woman urged Macbeth to his bloody deed; though disaster has followed the trail of many of Eve's fairest daughters; yet the most potent influence which sways the world

and forms the nucleus of its great unwritten tales is that of the women of our age.

To women who are sad and weary let me bear this message of hope and of cheer; somewhere beyond the silence lie the pleasure-grounds of peace.

Cease your pitiless little fights. Life is not worth a regret, but it merits a hope.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MRS. MALLORY MAKES A SCENE.

YESTERDAY, as I strolled along Broadway with Maurel, a woman joined us and "called him down" for being with me. She was short, stout, with no figure, haggard of face, with badly bleached hair.

She was quite fifty-five, not preserved in sugar, and utterly a back number.

The woman's quick, nervous manner seemed communicated to Maurel, and his white face and collapse from his usual nonchalance indicated that the woman had a strong hold upon him. She belonged to the class of women that delight in scenes.

"What right have you to be with this woman?" she questioned, with a sly, tricky gleam in her watery, blue eyes, from which the softness of youth had long passed.

I noticed that she spoke with a slight brogue and showed quite a gold mine in her mouth. Taking in the situation and shuddering from contact with the underbred creature, I meekly responded that I had only the right of an acquaintance.

"I think you lie," she hissed in my ear.

This aroused my combativeness and shifted me to the aggressive side of the absurd encounter.

"What right have *you* to control M. Maurel's acquaintance?" I asked.

"He has been my lover eight years. He wishes to marry me. He has followed me all over the world. While not desiring the bond of marriage, my life is given up to him. This is my claim to the man whom you are trying to allure from me."

I told her that the price she had paid preëmpted the property for her; and with a cold glance at Maurel and smile at the woman, I sent Maurel off with his antiquated mistress.

"Another drop of wormwood in life's cup!" I thought, as I jumped into a passing cab and drove to McCreery's.

"Maurel shall pay for this gown," I decided, as I selected and was fitted to the latest Parisian model, a cloth of mushroom color, with a sable collar. I also ordered a smart cape of black velvet lined with cream satin and trimmed with chinchilla.

This encounter will save my "money," I cheerfully mused, with the hard philosophy we learn in the high school of the world.

Years ago I would have come home and wept, now I come home and order a bird and small bottle of Ruinart to my rooms.

There was an opera air on my lips, but no music in my heart, as Heloise entered my apartment and smilingly exhibited an enamelled four-leafed clover

with diamond centre, which Albert Vane had just sent to her, "for luck," he declared.

"Heloise," I said, "you have luck already in youth and loveliness. Do not cross this good fortune with the clouds which passion brings. Be light of heart by being pure."

The girl put her arms about my neck and kissed my brow.

"Were you happy, Lenoir, in the long ago?" she asked.

"Heloise, you put a hard question to me. I really do not think I ever knew what that word means. My life was shadowed at the outset with an unfortunate marriage to one much older than myself. He was both libertine and cynic, and delighted in showing me the wickedness which the mask of pleasure often hides. Unable to appreciate purity, he sought to destroy it. He combined the taste of a sybarite with the habits of a debauché. He was not satisfied to imagine the beauties of the human form; he longed to possess them in premeditated abandonment to pleasure. He dragged his angel from its pedestal and dashed it in pieces against the coarseness of his voluptuous world.

"To a young woman trained in this school, breathing the poison of this atmosphere, happinesss could be only a brief ideal.

"This man's vices were so costly that but little of his wealth remained for me. We lived apart, I formed new associations and sought forgetfulness of

my marriage bonds, in the gayest life of Europe's capitals. From Petersburg to the Riviera I dashed, with a train of admirers in my wake.

"After varied fancies I met an American, Herbert Lee, with whom I had an affair of years' duration. He died of a fever at Rome. My grief for him softened my heart and made me more tolerant of the world.

"Since Herbert's death I have not been swayed by fancies. I have known men at their best and at their worst, and have found that only a few are worthy of a woman's love. Fidelity, one must not look for; men are born without morals; women may have their moral sense destroyed by circumstances and the atmosphere of licence. Again I warn you, Heloise, to guard your virtue as you would a sensitive plant. It is the one gem, when lost, that gold cannot replace."

The girl knelt at my side and gazed wistfully in my face. A tear glistened in her eye and she softly sighed. Possibly Heloise may not be so hopeless as I had feared.

"Did your husband die?" she asked.

I told her that after a prolonged debauch he fell dead of apoplexy in the drawing-room of a noted woman of the half world, and the earth to me then seemed full of light and harmony and peace.

After Heloise left me I again mused on the strange meeting with the woman who claimed control of my lover's life. Maurel could not have been attracted

to this *declassè* female by other than mercenary motives. With his figure and marvellous fascinations, even his gambling craze should not have led him down to such a depth.

* * * * *

Another day has passed, a long, hopeless day, with no message from my lover. I could not trade in stocks, my interest in fashion flagged. I was cross and quite intolerant of Heloise. I snubbed Albert Vane when he called on me after the close of the market. Vane's feeble efforts to make love to me met with no response. I recognize in him only a good-looking, conceited man to whom all women are prey for his desires. I questioned Vane regarding the strange looking woman I had met. He had heard of the association, but had not seen the woman.

"She has given Maurel much trouble, and he would gladly throw her over," Vane informed me.

* * * * *

Maurel came to me unheralded this evening. He knocked at the door of my rooms, and I received him with an indifferent smile. He brought no violets, but a flag of truce in the form of a little jewelled hatpin.

My gown and cape were in the boxes which had just come from McCreery's. I opened them and shook out the folds of the cloth gown, and slipping in the adjoining room quickly put it on, and returning, smiled into my lover's face.

He must have marked the contrast between the stubby form of his antique friend and the curves of my slender figure, which a luxurious life of indulgence has not, thank heaven, developed into *embonpoint.*

After turning me about and complimenting the fit and style of my gown, Maurel suddenly inquired its cost.

"To me, nothing. To you, one hundred and fifty dollars. Clothes are cheap now! The cape, too, I selected as another souvenir from you, a charming little atonement for the annoyance that old woman gave me.

Maurel's face flushed. The cold light I disliked came in his eyes, yet he smiled.

"I am pleased with your selection. I like you in fur. Warmth and luxury are your native element. To-morrow I will send you the check."

Colder grew his eyes, harder his voice. Did he intend to leave me forever? Had he made a better deal with the haggard woman of his wretched past?

The earth seemed slipping from beneath my feet. Life looked so hopeless without his love. I was not using my finest ribbons to drive Maurel.

In abandonment I tore off the gown and flung it from me. Kneeling beside him, in the soft laces that framed my white shoulders, I pressed my warm, quivering flesh against his heart.

"Solon, you are mine, always!" I cried. "Woman

nor God shall part us! My gold, my gems, my life are yours!"

He moved not nor yet spoke, but the fire slowly kindled in his amber eyes. Stooping, he kissed me once and again, then gently pushed me from him.

Rising to his feet he took my hands in his cool, firm grasp and tried to read my face.

"Woman or devil, which are you? They are much the same! Do you love or despise me? Are you playing a game with me or have I won, at last, a true and loyal heart?"

Winding his arms about me he drew me to his embrace, and the memory of the wretched hours of yesterday vanished like a hideous dream.

Later, robed in a pink *peignoir* and quite ready for the good-night visit of Heloise, my lover and I chatted, over our champagne and cigarettes about the "freak," as I jestingly named her, who had made that queer little circus on the street.

Maurel explained that it was an *affaire* begun years back when he had been unsuccessful. Knowing that the woman would inherit quite a fortune and already had considerable money, he yielded to her passion for him and permitted her to accompany or to follow him from Paris to Monaco, as the desire for play absorbed him or the exigencies of his finances required.

The woman was of Irish birth, but educated in England, and had resided many years in France. "Her name is Mrs. Mallory. She admits to forty-three, but really is fifty years of age. She is full of

Irish humor and not a bad sort, except when crazed with jealousy of me," Maurel said.

She had given him some valuable jewels, had staked him at play, and in return demanded as much of his attention as she dared to claim.

His story went on to state that the woman had often made scenes and had given him so much trouble that he rued the day when first he permitted himself to fall into her toils. While believing her true to him until their relations had become more or less platonic, he writhed at times under the thraldom of the financial favors he had accepted from her.

"We will return her money and cancel these old obligations," I declared.

With the sophistry that man ever employs in his dealings with woman, Maurel assured me that no relations but those of old friendship now existed between Mrs. Mallory and himself.

"The woman is quite alone in the world. She cares only for me, and is satisfied to have me visit her, rather than that our relations entirely cease," Maurel declared.

To convince me of his position regarding the woman, Maurel said that she had some months ago taken a fine house uptown, with the view of making a home for both herself and him. Her chagrin at his non-acceptance of this situation had aroused the woman's jealousy and suspicion. She had put detectives on his track and followed him along the streets. Catching her at these tricks, the woman often amused

him with a recital of their false scents and absurd reports. Regarding this phase of her passion for him, Maurel and the woman quarrelled most bitterly.

"She is like a rubber-ball," he laughed. "Punch her, sit on her and she rebounds again."

"Great heaven!" I thought, as my lover's good-night kisses lingered on my lips. "What better am I than this woman who has loved Maurel and bribed his passion with her gifts?"

I cannot find it in my heart to hate her. I can only give her the pity I accord all women who are forgotten, neglected and wearied of by man.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE.

MAUREL lost again at play. I gave him more money. I think I would give him my soul. Have I sunk to the level of the poor old relic who haunts his path?

Maurel has tried to keep away from this woman, but she entreats him to go to her. The other day she drove to his chambers and during his absence got possession of his little pet dog and took it with her. This was a trick to allure Maurel again to her side.

Mrs. Mallory might learn wisdom from the story of a celebrity of Bohemia, in London, who has held the fancy of a titled man for ten years. Without beauty or youth, but with the charm of a sunny nature and the accessories of great wealth, this woman appeals to the chivalry and the materialism of Count de Caux. Her carriage stands for hours in front of his chambers, awaiting the pleasure of the man who is a little tin god to madame. Her splendid and historical county seat near London, is at the service of the Count and his followers. No matter what his follies, vices, infidelities be, this woman calmly shuts her eyes and

receives him with a smile. Beautifully gowned and jewelled she presides over dinner-parties of his selection; and the pleasure of Count de Caux is to Mrs. Phillips an unwritten and honored law.

Mrs. Mallory has much to learn in the art of subjugating and holding the fancy of man.

Dine him, smile on him and amuse him, and the chances are ten to one that you can control his time.

Old Moneybags called to-day, and brought me an enamelled bracelet that he picked up in a curio shop. He knows my fad for antiques. Moneybags has the intolerable air of newness. His wealth is so eternally thrust upon me that this bagatelle, with its dainty finish of Eastern art, is to me a most pleasing relief from the glitter of his diamonds,

What a queen I could be as this man's wife!

The woman who bore his name probably little dreamt, when a girl in her Southern home, that she would some time be quoted in society journals as a leader of its most important functions.

Recently I met in old Moneybags' uptown office, an elderly man, well known about town, and a blonde woman long ago married to a character of the Press, one of our cleverest humorists. The husband tags on, at times, when the woman and her elderly lover do a theatre or a reception or take a little outing. This Mormonistic arrangement is one of society's curious features.

Brigham Young once pointed out this difference

between the Polygamist and the Christian. "*We* take care of our women. *You* neglect yours," he said.

This afternoon I had a call from a beautiful French woman of the rare type to whose radiant face white hair lends a charm. Mrs. Deane, another guest, raved over the woman's beauty and decided that she looked like the portrait of a famed beauty of the court of Louis XV.

"How could I accomplish this hair?" Mrs. Deane despairingly asked.

"Get a sorrow," I suggested.

"I have many," she sighed, "but they whiten neither my hair nor my heart."

"Then fall in love with a young man," I urged.

Heloise has a little friend whom we jestingly call "the young woman with Ideas." This girl has both heart and sympathy. She is new to metropolitan life. The young woman has aspirations for the operatic stage. During a recent visit to the office of a manager, she met and fell into conversation with a girl who had failed—the usual type. This particular girl had escaped from the hopeless limitations of a Western home to the more hopeless allurements of a theatrical career. When money, clothes and hope were exhausted, she vainly craved a chance to let the world see what she didn't know of vocal art.

The heart of Heloise's girl friend was deeply stirred by the pathetic tale. She sent clothes to the girl and made for her a little purse to defray pressing

needs and keep her from the temptations of this unholy town.

"The girl who deserts her home for the stage deserves to fail," we decided.

"No matter," our young enthusiast declared; "if a little aid will keep *one* girl off the streets of New York, I shall have my reward." The more we know of earth, the nearer we get to heaven.

Our daily life is full of unwritten romances, and it is well when they emanate from the tender heart of youth.

Would that Heloise were like this friend of hers; would that I could hold her back from the future she faces!

I am restive as a spirit of evil to-night. I want Maurel. Life is colorless without his smile. I sympathize with the woman who came to me on a queer errand to-day. She has several histories, but at present is in the throes of an entanglement with a man unworthy of her affection.

"His lapses in English annoy me, his sprees disgust me, his cupidity frets me; but his kisses atone for all his short-comings! Shall I marry and reform him?"

"No," I said. "Reform him if you will, but keep him as a lover. Marriage with a man like this would be fatal."

What false gods women worship!

CHAPTER XX.

PASSION'S ROYAL SPELL.

MRS. MALLORY continues her *espionage* of Maurel. She employs detectives and wearies herself following him on the street.

Maurel played me false the other day. We parted after a stroll on the Avenue, Maurel declaring that he must keep an appointment with a man at six o'clock. I suspected that he was deceiving me and decided to focus my doubts by going to a certain restaurant which he frequents.

Telephoning Albert Vane to meet me at six, on a side street, near this restaurant, I awaited developments. Promptly at six Vane arrived, and we seated ourselves in the restaurant and ordered dinner. Later, Maurel, with two ladies and another man, gayly dashed into the place, and took seats near by. Maurel's face was turned from me, and his attention was engaged with the rather shady-looking woman who accompanied him. Albert Vane looked at the quartette and smiled.

"I warned you against Maurel," he said. "You are too clever and too good a woman to fall beneath this man's influence."

"Maurel is nothing to me. I am too conversant with men to be affected by any of the sex," I laughed.

"Ah, Lenoir," the broker deprecatingly said, "you combine, with the ability of a man, the soft, tender heart of a woman. The world has not brushed all the bloom from your life, and with this woman's heart you love Maurel."

"Granting that I do, then what?"

"You will learn to despise yourself and hate him."

"Albert, it is not for you to turn philanthropist or preacher, at this stage of the game," I cynically decided.

"Would that I could have won your love!" the dashing broker soliloquized, as we drained our glasses and smiled across the table.

I laughed in his face, and told him that love between two natures like ours would be a little comedy indeed.

"You are the froth of life's wine. Your part is that of leading juvenile. Don't attempt a heavier rôle," I urged Mr. Vane. "Do you love Heloise?" I asked, after a silence.

"I adore beauty in all women," he said, cleverly shirking the question "Why do you ask this, Lenoir?" leaning toward me, and smiling.

I responded that I feared the girl was becoming too fond of him.

Vane laughed. "That girl has no heart. Why bother your pretty head with her little affairs?"

"Because I still have enough of the angel in me to want to keep the devil from dominating another woman's life."

Just then Mrs. Mallory trudged into the restaurant with a tall, dark man, whom she had impressed into her service. They seated themselves at a table near Maurel's party, and the color faded from his face. Suddenly he turned and gave me a long glance of mingled satisfaction and scorn.

"You are my jealous slave: you got this woman here," it meant.

At that moment I could have put a dagger into my lover's heart.

Mrs. Mallory watched Maurel, with a greenish glitter in her eyes, while she chatted furiously with her escort. With all her vulgarity, Mrs. Mallory has a heart which Maurel is hurting.

Maurel's party evidently hastened with their dinner. They shortly arose from the table, and Mrs. Mallory prepared to follow them.

Leaving Maurel to the tender clutches of his old friend, Albert Vane and I continued our dinner, and later, looked in at The Olympia—Do we grow more artistic or more vulgar? I moralized during the show. Is it with us the finest asceticism or the grossest materialism? Nature had full play among the ancient Greeks and Romans. A woman's virtue was not measured by the length of her skirts. The most suggestive dancing is done in a trailing frock.

This age is moved by electricity. The steam from

the kettle which inspired the power that whirls us over the plains will soon be superseded by the electric spark that will flash us through the world.

Whether or not the age be better, it is faster. Its progress cannot be stayed. Its possibilities are limitless.

We rush ever on, we know not to what. We strain body and soul in the mad race for achievement. To do something, love something and be something should be the aim of life. Do we return in other conditions to go over it all or do we sink at last into the eternal Nirvana?

From the silence no whisper floats. We toil and wait.

It was midnight last night, when Maurel sought me, with hatred in his glance.

"What right had you to put that woman on my track?" he questioned.

"The right of one to whom you had lied and had wronged," I replied.

"What injustice to you was it for me to join friends at dinner? Is my life subject to your whims? Am I to have no friends, no amusements aside from you?"

"You are talking as a woman might; as a man always does when disturbed," I declared. "Men are but children grown up. What did the Mallory do?" I continued. "Something vulgar, of course."

"Yes. She made a similar nasty scene to the one

she made with you. The woman is quite intolerable."

"Once you held a different opinion. The woman is the same; *you* have changed. You have outgrown Mrs. Mallory."

"What would you have me do with this woman?" Maurel questioned.

"Give her up. Tell her the simple truth. Drive the knife into her heart at once. Tell her that she belongs to your past, which is dead. It is a man's province to crush woman's love. Better that than the slow deception of false hope. By the way," I continued, "I want to show you a picture of yourself taken in the past, possibly before the reign of Mrs. Mallory. You did not ruin *her*, I am sure. Did you ruin the mother of Rosette? Her child was yours. Rosette's face was the reflection of your own. I saw Elise die. I closed the eyes of her child. Is it strange, Solon Maurel, that even the god of chance deserts you at times?"

"Angel or devil I have called you, Lenoir. To me you seem to-night an avenging spirit from the regions of hell. Since you know the worst of my life, know also the best. I loved Elise. Had it not been for the will of my father and the inexorable laws of France, I would have made her my wife. Though a woman of the theatre, she was good and true to me. She gave me the honest love that few women of society ever experience. I was called away on business, I intended to return and make

what meagre atonement I might for the woman's fidelity, and also to provide for our child. I went back, alas, too late, to learn that death had ended the sweetest episode of my career. Judge me not too harshly, Lenoir. I have paid the penalty of all my sins, and you are the one link which binds me to a life that I have outraged and desecrated."

Forgetting the blonde *fille de joie*, forgetting the withered woman whose accursed gold had bound my lover to her chariot wheels, I wound my arms about his neck and in his kisses sipped the sweetness of passion's royal spell.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MRS. MALLORY.

MRS. MALLORY'S card came up to-day while I was finishing my toilet. The woman wishes to subject me to the high lights of the morning, was my mental conclusion. She seemed ill at ease and looked more haggard still, as she bustled into my sitting-room.

Giving me a distrustful glance, my visitor dashed at once into the subject nearest her heart.

"I hear that Solon Maurel is trying to trick you into believing that he loves you; he is playing with you the game he plays with all women for whom he has use," she said, in her harsh voice that jarred upon my nerves as the clang and clash of a cable-car does.

"Have a smoke and a drink," I suggested, with a smile. "Let me make you a Martinni and try a Nestor. *I* am not addicted to cocktails, they spoil the complexion, but I will gladly join you in a toast to our absent friend: may his conquests never cease."

Mrs. Mallory drank her cocktail, but declined the cigarette. Her keen eyes spied the inscription on my gold case, "To L. from S. M."

"Ah, he gives you things," she exclaimed. "He

must have won money, of late. Maurel is not generous."

I explained that the cigarette case was a mere bagatelle he sent me one day following a dinner in my rooms, which had pleased his fancy.

"Were other women present?" my visitor asked.

"Yes," I laughed; "among them was a girl of the siren type named Heloise. M. Maurel admires her greatly."

"Is she rich?" Mrs. Mallory gasped.

I replied that Heloise had little beside looks, and the hope of a good time in the world that is to her a great playground, full of soft, grassy spots and radiant with flowers.

"The grass will wither and the flowers fade beneath the blight of that man's influence," his old friend mused, with a touch of regret in her tone.

I assured her that the girl would not be affected by the Frenchman's charms, as I feared what little heart she had was given to a man perhaps less worthy of it.

"No man could be more unworthy than Solon Maurel. His heart has long since become petrified," said Mrs. Mallory.

"You must be the judge, my good lady," I acquiesced. "You consider that you have a first mortgage upon him, I have heard."

"I do not know whether you may call my claim a first, second or third mortgage," the woman sneered. "Most men are mortgaged for more than their value,

after the first one is satisfied, usually but little remains for other unfortunate investors."

"The thing which gives us pleasure, too often also gives us pain," I half sighed. "Knowing all their follies, vices, deceptions, and sins, it does seem a bit odd that we women continue to regild our gods."

A chord in the nature of Mrs. Mallory touched my heart. I think I have less jealousy than most of my sex. I regret, rather than triumph, over the failure of another woman to hold a man's fancy. My chivalric spirit inclines me to pity a predecessor, at least when I fear no rivalry.

"Had you ever seen those women who were with Maurel at Delmonico's the other evening?" my visitor questioned. I assured her that they were strangers to me.

"None of his associates are unknown to me," she declared. "I have followed him often, and have broken him up with several women. I really deserved their gratitude. Maurel is a most worthless and dangerous man."

"May I ask why you desire to continue your acquaintance and friendship with him?" I questioned.

"Only from the tie of old associations," she replied. "My life was linked so long with his, that to sever the bond now would seem like obliterating many happy events, and forgetting much pleasure of the past."

"Has not the man brought more unhappiness than joy into your life?" I persisted, with apparent rudeness.

"A man of Maurel's type causes suffering to any woman who cares for him," she said.

I felt a bit of moisture in my eye, and I arose to mix another cocktail for Mrs. Mallory.

After dashing it off, she said, in a harsher tone, "You are a great fool to waste your time on Solon Maurel. He will spend your money, and break your heart, if you have one. He has the iron will and magnetism that mould women to his fancy. He made me what I am. Be careful that he does not make you *like me.*"

The woman drew her glittering, beaded wrap about her shoulders, and laughing a hard, reckless laugh, arose to leave.

Taking the picture of Maurel from a drawer of my writing-desk, I handed it to her. She eagerly grasped it.

"Was this also one of Maurel's presents?" the woman mockingly questioned.

"Like the original it has a history, and came to me by accident, as Maurel himself did. Slip it out of the frame and read the love-legend written there," I brutally suggested.

"To Elise, with my deathless love."

"The devil!" Mrs. Mallory exclaimed, with a glitter in her eye, that portended harm to Maurel.

I had never seen such an expression of hatred and

revenge in a woman's face; it made me shiver with regret that I had shown her the picture.

"How long have you had this sweet souvenir of this especial *liaison* of Maurel's?" she gasped, tossing off her wrap and leaning heavily on the table.

I related the story of Elise and her dead child, but I spared her Maurel's confession of love for the woman.

"'With his deathless love!' His deathless lies, he should have written," Mrs. Mallory sneered. "Solon has been true only to himself, but some day his luck will turn and even the devil will desert him. It was to warn you against Maurel that I sought you to-day. You will call me jealous, maybe I am. *You* have a future apart from him. Maurel must not desert *me*. I say he *must* not. You comprehend my meaning, madame? I thank you for showing me the picture; and now good-bye."

My visitor rustled her silken garments out of the room, and I breathed a sigh of relief at the termination of our interview.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN EVENING IN BOHEMIA.

QUITE a week has passed since I have had time to write. I preferred letting Mrs Mallory relate the details of her visit to me, rather than bore Maurel with them myself. Long ago I discovered that my rôle is to entertain men. I thought that nothing relating to Mrs. Mallory would amuse Maurel. She wearies him so.

Men lack tact and therefore claim ingenuousness. Maurel mentioned to me the visit of his old adorer. "She does not hate *you*, Lenoir," he declared. "I realize that you charmed her, as you do all who meet you. Mrs. Mallory went to warn you against *me*. Her jealousy drove her to this. Would that I could blot her memory from my life!"

"Where did you see her?" I asked.

"She sent a message that she was ill, and entreated me to go to her. The memory of old friendship and past kindness induced me to respond in person to her note. The woman really *was* ill. She had worked herself up into the belief that she was dying, and she made a will in my favor."

"It was only a trick to win back your attention

and regain her hold over you. She thinks you for sale to the highest bidder. A woman who once lends herself to this horrible traffic in human flesh never abandons it," I declared.

"Possibly you imagine that I care more for your paltry dollars than for your own sweet self, Lenoir," my lover musingly said. "But you misjudge me, as the future will prove. I would rather give to than receive from you."

"For me, there is only the present; the past is dead, the future is yet unborn," I sighed.

With a sudden transition of mood, I suggested to Maurel that we call for Mrs. Caton, and go to a Bohemian dinner. I had a fancy for the light wit and wine, and sparkle of Bohemia, "That borderland where quips and jests serve sauce *piquant* to frugal dinners; where weary saints their halos lay to rest, content to pose the while as sinners."

Rosseau called, just then, and I asked him to join our little party.

"Lenoir," he laughed. "I am *ennui* to-night, and came to you for the remedy. A glimpse of you works a magical cure, you always look ready to say such delightfully improper things."

"Usually I have just said them," I retorted. I went on to tell them of an afternoon drive with Mrs. Steele.

"Were you driving open or closed?" asked Maurel.

"Oh, in the brougham, with the windows shut. I

wonder why that woman excludes air from her apartments and equipage? It would give to her face the bloom which no cosmetic could."

"Don't you know that a mummy would drop in pieces were it exposed to the air," Rosseau commented, with a quizzical smile. He told us how he flattered Mrs. Lynn, the other night, by telling her that he remembered with pleasure meeting her mother in Mrs. Steele's salon, lately. "No," Mrs. Lynn smiled. "*I* am the mother, it was my daughter you met."

I told Rosseau that I had been to Mrs. Cummings' Saturday luncheon-party with its mob of well-dressed humanity, its orchestrian music, and its display of antique furnishings, that suggested to an English guest a comparison with the faded grandeur of Warwick Castle. The stately beauty of the young Countess of Warwick did not dazzle the eye in pictured splendor, the ancestry of ages was missing amid domestic portraits. The rooms are a curious *mélange* of the old and the new, while the crowd that streamed through them was distinctly the latter.

"Were the hostess' lovers all present?" the incorrigible Rosseau asked.

"Only three," I laughed. Mrs. Cummings grows careful; she has hopes of bringing out her daughter in the near future. The girl will have at least the prestige of wealth.

"I recently heard that a droll little figure, well known about town, declined to enter Mrs. Cummings'

drawing-room, that day, on the plea of dislike for one of the guests."

"In my wanderings through the salons of notabilities, and of Bohemians, on both sides of the water, I have met many queer people, but none so queer as this young woman," he gasped, catching a glimpse of the dark-eyed, loud-voiced girl, who hung against the heavy brocaded portière which revealed between its folds the giddy throng within.

"What are your objections to the young lady? Is it her manners or her morals? the latter must be correct; the hostess goes in for contrast in her guests, as in her gowning," a wag more cleverly than civilly remarked.

"It is her manners, the little man declared.

"Oh, they may be mended more easily than morals," continued the wag. "Morals, like mended china, are likely to crumble to pieces again. Manners are subject to permanent repairs."

"Apropos of this," I laughed, pinning my violets amid the chiffon of my corsage, near my throat, that their fragrance might sweeten my speech and my heart—"I shocked Mrs. Delano, the other night by saying that the spot of wine on my pretty crêpe gown was quite immaterial, so long as I brought home my character clean."

It was the Lewis' Sunday evening at home, with a lot of interesting people, culled from Bohemia's brightest wits and lightest hearts, where music and

song ruled the hour, and good cheer appealed to both palate and brain.

The hostess, once the most noted beauty of the stage, and her daughter, scarce less lovely, entertained with open hand, and gracious charm. Mrs. Lewis is a wit as well as a beauty, and cleverly diverts sarcasm into repartee. Having lived a dozen lives, she has simmered down into complete resignation of her own past conquests, and delights in those of her daughter.

"Select a card," a popular and facetious actor asked Mrs. Lewis, as he attempted a card trick. "One that represents me," he said, *sub rosa.*

"I have it, the knave of hearts," his smiling hostess decided.

"I will select for you the queen of hearts," was the gallant rejoinder.

Compliment among American men is so fast becoming a lost art, that even its most insincere ring falls pleasantly on the ear.

"Where is your latest male acquisition?" Mrs. Lewis jokingly asked a pretty little soubrette.

"Taking a vacation, I have his twin with me tonight," the actress replied.

Mrs. Lewis explained that her friend of the footlights jestingly terms her husband and her lover the "Heavenly Twins." They pull well together in double harness, and sometimes she drives them single.

Rousseau told us that seeing a diamond cross-pin on the snowy breast of a noted man about town, one

night at the theatre, he asked a wit why Ben Harlowe wore his cross in public?

"Because his best girl is just getting married."

"Lucrative situation?" Rosseau inquired.

"Well, rather; she will have a solid support, as her *fiancé* turns the scales at over two hundred pounds."

"Dear me, a man should rejoice to get his girl's bills paid, in these times," my lover remarked, with a sarcastic smile.

There are moments when I could crush the life out of Maurel, as I would crush a serpent!

"Are we ready to adjourn to Bohemia?" Maurel asked, gayly pinning in his coat a buttonhole of violets, from my table.

Maurel softens sarcasm with cajoleries, and smothers wounds in flowers.

I think this art is the keynote to his success with women.

"Bohemia, in New York, usually implies only noise and poor dinners," Rosseau carped. "In London, it signifies culture and the magic charm of a *coterie* into which the password is talent."

We stopped for Mrs. Caton and adjourned to a little restaurant, with appointments of Delft blue and white, the soft, artistic harmony extending through walls, hangings and china.

"It pleases me greatly. I adore the all-over effect. Contrast jars on my nerves," Rosseau decided, in his slow and somewhat solemn tone.

"I am not a bit blue to-night, Rosseau," Mrs. Caton

declared. "I fear the contrast may affect your color nerves."

"You are dainty as Delft and brilliant as Dresden; you are a complete harmony, and fit any surroundings," Rosseau declared, with the charm of speech he has acquired in foreign drawing-rooms.

Mrs. Caton lighted a cigarette and beamed on Rosseau. I do not smoke in public, reserving this privilege for the companionship of my guests at home, or for my own distraction when alone.

I do not oppose the habit in other women, but it does not seem to suit me among strangers.

A fancy of mine is not to let habits merge into vices; although criticised for these notions, I think I command more attention from men by checking my appetite, at least in public places.

A woman must control herself, that she may rule men!

A well-known man about town lounged into the little Bohemian den, with a look of superiority to the kindred spirits assembled therein. The débris of the upper world, the world of society, seemed to cling to his garments.

Being a bit under the influence of wine his mood and manner were somewhat aggressive.

"I think only a few really respectable women come here," he declared, with a conceited smirk on his faded, blonde face.

"This must be your reason for frequenting the place," I retaliated.

"Of course *you* are not included in my criticism. I should always defend *you*, anywhere," he said, in a feeble attempt at apology.

"You could not defend me," I replied. Defence implies error; the only demand I make of my friends is silence."

This man's craving for notoriety distresses me. He is thrown over by society, yet not quite accepted by Bohemia. We class women of this type as belonging to the half-world; such men have no defined status.

This reminds me of a remark a young and caustic editor made concerning the woman's page of his newspaper. "There is no excuse for it. I think it is read only in the Provinces. Why not as well have a man's page?"

"It would likely be too full," I commented. "However, we may attempt this some day. A man's page would teem with gossip of the clubs, the turf and the sporting world."

"This is concentrated in the page devoted to sports, in all our dailies," said Maurel.

"Quite so," I acquiesced; "but I would like to see a page in each Sunday edition, devoted exclusively to gossip for men; they are quite as fond of it as women are accredited with being. Most of the scandals which startle society emanate from men's clubs. A spark from a cigarette sometimes kindles a great flame, and a word from the lips of a heedless man often ignites a fire of gossip which destroys a woman's reputation."

Into the dainty headquarters of Bohemia swept the incongruous throngs of artists, actors, and men of the Press. Fresh from their labors of the brush, the stage, and the pen, they came to pass the evening hours in laughter and song.

Introductions are unnecessary within this circle; your neighbor for the nonce is your friend. The man that serves soup at the head of a table at once establishes a bond of union between the other occupants of the board. The man that dresses the salad is voted a comrade by his companions When a festive spirit more quickly than the others absorbs his bottle of claret, a neighbor pushes his own towards him. No bond is more easily forged than that which binds people of the peculiar temperament, which constitutes Bohemianism. This quality is innate, and can but rarely be acquired. A millionaire may toss aside the conventionalities of the broader world of wealth, and wander into a Bohemian crowd, but he must have its instincts within his breast. Champagne corks may pop, but red wine is the stuff which colors the cheeks, loosens the tongue and sharpens the wits of the *habitues* of *la Bohème.*

Ahern and Lucas of the Globe, joined our party, and across the table sat Adair and his clever wife, for whom the unconventionality of the scene is a ceaseless delight.

There was a lull in the laughter, to watch Adair play the castanets, with which he recalled his old life in Spain. Glasses were refilled and drained, while

young Lucas gave his cleverest dialect recitation, and his chum imitated the costermonger songs of Chevalier.

Lips too full for utterance, smiled in supreme satisfaction, while handsome Charlie De Vere sang his sweetest love-song, and Mabel Joy gave snatches from the comic operas in which she used to sing herself into the fancy of the gilded youth.

There are blurs even on the brightness of Bohemia. A man worn and seedy strolled into the place and was recognized as a one-time operatic star, with a voice that the angels might envy. Now cracked with time, and ruined by dissipation, the strains that flooded an opera-house with melody, could bring only a tear to the eyes of his listeners.

The ball of time unravels its threads and breaks them, and human hearts, and hopes, and lives, are caught in the snarl of a pitiless fatality. The wrecks of genius are saddest wrecks of all!

Maurel soon wearied of the Bohemian assemblage. He prefers the better-dressed throng of the Waldorf, or the associates of his sporting world. Solon has not the instincts of Bohemia. Only the restless atmosphere of the gamester appeals to him.

Russeau, having lived the life of the artist, inclines to the freedom and fellowship of Bohemianism. Mrs. Caton is to the manner born, and her wit is never brighter than when amid these kindred souls. I checked her flow of spirits and stopped her stories, lest she be mistaken for a woman of a class to which she

does not belong. John Medill joined us at table, and soon monopolized Mrs. Caton. His pose is that of excessive interest in new women, I do not mean "the new woman," but any new attraction in womankind. Mrs. Caton was quite a novelty to him, indeed I might say she was a revelation.

John Medill interests me by his peculiar contradictions. The strength of his face belies the weakness of his nature. His two natures, the spiritual and the material, struggle incessantly.

Medill works hard, and deserves a high place in the world of letters. Could he shake at once, and forever, the dust of Bohemia from his feet, he would win it.

I overheard Mrs. Caton putting to Medill the question as to what economy means? His reply was: "It means doing without something one really wants, and afterwards getting something one doesn't want."

It struck me that this same definition might apply to Bohemianism. It means eating a crust, with a smile, and expending a dollar for a needless pleasure. It means a hole in a pocket, that no thread may mend. It means a nature which hopes ever, and realizes but rarely. It means boon companionship for the night, and regret in the morning. Yet always it indicates laughter and song, and jolly cheer.

John Medill is a true Bohemian; with the instincts of his craft he deserted Mrs. Caton for a couple of tawdry girls, with roses in their hats, and cigarettes between their ruby lips. One girl sang in a music hall, and the other posed as an artist's model. Each

had all the vices of women older in sin, yet their ruddy charm of youth attracted the jaded fancy of John Medill.

Such women are young without youth; they are vicious without apology; they drag the brain and the soul out of men like John Medill, and enchain their lives in the fetters of materialism. "Having had our fancy tickled, we must now indulge our palates," Maurel suggested.

Following his lead, we rounded out the evening amid the brilliancy of the winter garden at the Waldorf, where we were joined by Fred Manton in a *petit souper*, with Fred's favorite wine.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CAUGHT IN THE SPIDER'S WEB.

"SAINT" looked me up this morning to exhibit her smart new gown, and to give me the latest *mots*. She had been a guest at a dinner of twenty-four covers the preceding evening. I could not refrain from asking how many uncovers there were.

"Eleven," the girl quickly rejoined. "*I* do not pose, socially, for the altogether."

I told "Saint" that I shocked a friend from Chicago, in the theatre lately, by my comments on the hostess of the "eleven uncovers." The lady drew my attention to a box in which was seated the handsome woman in question, with her husband and three other men. "She always has three or four men besides her husband," my critical friend declared.

"She is in great luck," I replied. "Many women cannot get even the husband."

"Women of the Windy City not only get husbands, it seems to me, but get rid of them," was "Saint's" criticism.

"It is often easier to get rid of these appendages than to get them," I declared.

This recalled a conversation I recently had with a

bachelor friend of sixty well-spent winters. To my question as to the cause of his escape from marriage, he acknowledged that he could not get a wife.

"You should have taken a maid or a widow," I laughed. "Possibly you have devoted too much time to other men's wives to get one of your own."

The jolly old gentleman went on to tell me that he often noted the career of a newspaper, with similar interest to that of some of his married friends; both are sinking-funds, with the hope of better returns in the future.

To-day I met by accident, or luck, a man well up in Wall Street deals, who kindly gave me the tip to buy Tennessee Coal & Iron, that *ignis-fatuus* of the Street. I told General Drew that I had lost money in the stock, when the bond syndicate unloaded its holdings, and the pool in Tennessee had to follow suit. On the General's assurance of success by carefully noting the movements of the stock, I again decided to venture into the whirlpool. I thought it better not to confide in Moneybags, but to go it alone.

I drove to the uptown office of Bull & Bear, to see Albert Vane, after the market closed, when he would be at liberty to look up my margin, that I might order as much stock bought as it would enable me to carry.

The front office was closed, but a voice floated to me over the transom; it sounded like that of Heloise, but its ring was hard and cold, as she

laughed in reckless defiance. Albert Vane's laughter mingled with hers, but their voices clashed like discordant music.

The broker answered my tap on the door of the private office, and flushed with surprise at seeing me standing on the threshold of his sanctum of pleasure.

Heloise was lolling back in an easy-chair, nibbling caramels. Her feet swung in careless abandon, and her big plumed hat was a bit awry above her pretty flushed face. It was evident that she had been having a little celebration with her insinuating lover.

"Are you speculating, Heloise?" I queried.

"Yes; but not in stocks. I was wondering what brought you here at this hour."

I told her that I came there to get a statement of my account, and to give Mr. Vane an order for the morning. I asked her if she could give so satisfactory an explanation of her visit.

"I never explain," the girl insolently rejoined. "Explanation spoils imagination; yours is most vivid always; it gives color to your suspicions and biases your judgment."

"This quality of mine were unnecessary in your case," I retorted. "Your habits and life furnish the singular facts which discount fiction."

"Come, ladies, do not have a sparring match of words in my den," Vane laughed. "Miss Neville, join me in a toast to our mutual friend; may her margin, like her beauty, never diminish."

After they had drank the toast I declined the wine Vane offered me, on the plea that it was bad form to drink in a business office.

"Not after business hours," Albert smilingly said. "But a truce to pleasure, if you will. Let us go over your statement, while Heloise amuses herself, in the front room, with Broadway's passing show."

"You wish to get rid of me," the girl sulkily said. "Lenoir is jealous of me. Her refusal of wine is a rebuke to me; she teaches me vices, then scolds me for practicing them."

The girl's ingratitude and injustice blinded me to her charm of youth and beauty, and prompted me to tell her that my self-complaisance permitted me to acknowledge no jealousy, except for a formidable rival, even in the case of a man for whom I might care.

Albert Vane's white teeth glittered beneath his dark moustache, as he dashed off a glass of wine, and handed one to the girl.

Forgetting my impatience, I went over to her side, and gently taking the glass from her hand, I smoothed back the fluffy mass of hair and straightened her hat above it.

Slowly pulling herself out of the chair and scattering the bon-bons on the floor, Heloise wandered off into the front room, where she threw herself down on a big leather lounge.

"Come, let us get at your account," the broker suggested, with a shrug of his shoulders.

That shrug decided me to give another broker my commission in the morning on the block of T. C. & I., and cost Albert Vane quite a neat little sum.

Some men can be punished through their hearts, others through their pockets; Albert Vane is of the latter class.

Turning sharply upon him, I said: "You have done a devil's work to-day, and merit the frown of heaven, which should fall on all such men as you."

Catching my meaning, he replied. "Don't indulge heroics, Lenoir, the girl is all right."

"Possibly she is, from your standpoint, but not from mine. Men measure women by what they are, not by what they should be, and Heloise is far from being all right," I scornfully replied.

A brain-wave swept my fancy back to my own unhappy past, and from it shone the sceptre of my dead innocence and charm.

Leaving the back office, I went to Heloise and aroused her from the slumber into which she was falling. She drowsily got up and smiled at her bright reflection in the mirror, as she clasped her fur-trimmed cape about her throat and tied a white veil over her face, still flushed with the dissipation of the day.

Albert Vane handed us into the carriage, and we drove to Mrs. Caton's.

Experience has taught me that strategic methods succeed with women as with men, oftener than criticism of their errors does. I thought it wise to round out Heloise's afternoon with the repartee and good

cheer which we were sure to find in Mrs. Caton's cosy flat.

I declined her proffered hospitality in the sparkling form of wine, but accepted a cup of fragrant Russian tea.

"Lenoir is about to take the Gold Cure," Heloise jokingly said. "She will drink just before getting a jab of bi-chloride in her veins."

Mrs. Caton took the cue that Heloise had been drinking sufficiently for the afternoon, and was in the humor to ventilate her wit.

"Did you attend Mrs. Delano's reception, or tea and talk, on Saturday afternoon?" Mrs. Caton asked.

"Lenoir went; I am not fond of antiques," the girl laughed, with the insolence that youth offers to age. "What era does Mrs. Delano represent, what is her date?"

"Women of fashion have no date, my dear," I rebukingly said.

"They have dates," the girl rejoined. "I have heard them making them in hallways at receptions," they often have a date, as well. How droll it would be to see Mrs. Delano taking herself to pieces on going to bed, sans teeth, sans hair, sans rouge, sans everything but figure, she does not remove that, I believe. It was God's greatest compliment to her, and she has preserved its charm. She goes in for repairs at the beginning of each season and comes out freshly painted," Heloise giggled, and suggested that it would be funny if Mrs. Delano would give a birthday party,

with a cake in the centre of the table, stuck with the number of candles corresponding to her age. What a big cake it would take!

"Not nearly so big a one as Mrs. Steele would need," I suggested. By the way the dear old lady does not approve of bicycling for women. She despises and distrusts the twentieth-century woman, the coming woman, as she calls her. I shocked her greatly by asserting that I am the woman who has already arrived.

Mrs. Steele declares that the new woman has ceased to be feminine enough to inspire love, and has not become masculine enough to make love. The old lady preserves the daintiness and charm of extreme femininity amid the rush and worry of social life.

Mrs. Caton repeated to us a remark of Mrs. Delano's, to the effect that she has quite ceased introducing her friends to one another, because she loses them.

Mrs. Delano is a social philosopher.

What an opportunity offers for a novelist to throw the X rays of genius upon the heart of society; to word-paint it as a splendid nude; to scrape the veneer from its surface, and tear the spangles from its glittering robes.

Has society a heart? Yes; amid its *frou-frou* and follies, the candles flicker, the flowers droop, and hearts ache and hearts break as surely on Murray Hill as in the squalor of the Bowery.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE VERDICT AGAINST ALBERT VANE.

I WAS having quite a little circus this afternoon with some artists, singers, and social fragments at Claire Raymond's *musicale*, when Claire's husband came in.

These days of his wife's are nightmares to Eddie Raymond. He always comes home late and scowls at the guests. Eddie is not a bad sort out of society. He permits Claire to run up bills. Some husbands wince at giving even this privilege; moreover, Eddie does not grumble at long credit for these bills, but he is intolerant of his wife's social aspirations.

"I do not see much of you on the Avenue of late," he said to me. "What are your haunts?"

"I go to the Bowery to avoid my friends," I laughed.

"I heard that Madame Vaillant was writing a novel, and I wondered if we would all go in it," pretty Mrs. Tilden smilingly interposed.

"That is in my line; let me bring it out," a young Publisher suggested.

"You may," I returned, "for quite a consideration."

"I would like to make *you* the heroine of a novel and write the story of your life; all the pages would

be seasoned with red pepper," the young man continued.

"You could not make me a heroine; I would be only a leading lady. Heroines have ceased to exist, even in novels," I replied.

It amuses me to meet the same men at all the afternoon teas or receptions which I attend; they seem like a claque at the theatre—always on hand to applaud the performance.

Some of these men are brokers, some are artists, while a few are actors. The two latter receive most attention. The artists give charming studio teas and *musicales*, which the actors attend.

Mr. Vaughn, a clever artist in oils, announced his intention of having two days at home, because his set was too large to admit in one day.

A bright woman tried to ascertain from him which type would be represented on each of these days.

"I shall have the best music and recitations on the first day, as more professionals will favor my studio with their gifted presence," Mr. Vaughn informed her.

"Put me down for that day," she decided.

Young Vaughn's studio *musicales* are interesting. He attracts genuine talent, and is honestly liked by his friends. Percy Vaughn comes from the fair land of the South, whose men idealize women, and treasure the traditions of virtue amid its burlesque in the salons of a more rapid northern land.

It is disastrous for a woman to indulge an intrigue with a Southern man, to whom there are only

two classes—good women and evil ones. He pays homage to the one, and amuses himself with the other; no middle ground exists for him. His mother and sisters represent the real women of the world; the other class are mere dolls to decorate with gems.

Could I instill this truth into the heart of Heloise regarding all men my work with her would be easier.

The girl attempted some of Mrs. Caton's *risque* stories, to Percy Vaughn at his *musicale*, and fancied that he was pleased because he smiled his slow, languid smile.

She was callous to my frown, and persisted in her chatter.

"Dear me, he paints women without much clothes," she argued.

"Quite right, Heloise," I acquiesced; "but he does not marry his models. Mr. Vaughn distinguishes art from vulgarity—only a refined nature is capable of this."

Albert Vane called on me to-night, and began to comment on Heloise. I was frank with him regarding the girl.

"You have no love for her," I declared. "You have not even a passion. Your self-love is flattered by Heloise's beauty and apparent fancy for you. You have no intention of marrying her."

"Would you care for me to do this?" Vane asked, with a more serious expression than I deemed him capable of.

"I think not," I replied. "I undertook in the

beginning of our strange friendship to steer this girl into a safer port than your love or your life offers. The world has not yet withered her roses as it has mine. A pet fancy, possibly a fallacy of mine, was that I might preserve the exquisite charm of innocence in Heloise, and be the medium of happiness rather than of sorrow to her. My observations in your office destroyed this illusion. I prefer now that she drift with the tide of circumstance into the harbor of success rather than to float on shallow water, allured by the flickering and unsteady light of your love. Your fancy, like the will-o'-the-wisp leads over marshes into dark depths beyond."

"You do not flatter me, Lenoir," Vane gasped, his face whitening beneath my scrutiny.

"I have learnt that truth is more potent than flattery with men like you," I returned. "Flattery is the choicest weapon for our foes. Truth is the dull blade with which we fence in friendship."

If Albert Vane were only playing a little game with me to further entice Heloise, or could he by chance develop a genuine emotion, I have decided that he and Heloise shall not enact the comedy of marriage.

CHAPTER XXV.

WOMEN, WINE, AND WIT.

I MADE so large a profit on my Tennessee Coal and Iron deal, that I decided to celebrate my success in a little dinner party, comprising Mrs. Caton, Mrs. Fulton from Chicago, Heloise, Percy Vaughn, Maurel, Count D'Arville and Fred Manton.

Heloise urged that Albert Vane be asked instead of Fred Manton, but my indignation against the broker was too great and too recent for me to spoil my evening with his presence.

I am endeavoring to win Heloise from Vane, to cure her fancy by presenting new men to her, and surrounding her with a more brilliant atmosphere than that in which Vane flourishes.

"What flowers shall you use at dinner?" asked Heloise. "My dress must harmonize with them."

I told her that I had ordered lilies, and would wear jet-spangled *mousseline*—a smart contrast to my flowers.

"Lenoir, you surprise me," the girl gasped. "How can you so defy luck; don't you know that lilies are fatal, and are suggestive of woe? People of the South are superstitious about all varieties of

the lily—they will not have them around their homes."

I told her that the Calla lily is emblematic of the joys of Easter, and this was my reason for selecting it to adorn and perfume my dinner-table.

"You grow semi-religious," the girl mockingly declared.

"No, Heloise," I returned. "I grow fonder of all things pure and fragrant. If I am fanciful, it is that I be not disillusionized by contact with coarse fabrics and vulgarians. In my life, as in my perfumes, I prefer the essence to the extract; a drop of this behind my ear is better than a dozen drops of extract on my handkerchief, I can work only in an atmosphere heavy and rich and seductive with incense and pastilles. In worship, as in secular surroundings, I love pomp and color. When the sun blazes above, and the earth smiles beneath its beams, I love life, with its glory of nature. When music throbs through a church, and candles burn, and censers swing, I worship the invisible essence of life, which we call God."

"Lenoir, you should love a better man than Solon Maurel," Heloise said, nestling close to my side.

"The artistic temperament of Maurel appeals to me. He differs so much from most men, who are only walking models for their tailors," I replied.

In truth my fancy for the Frenchman stultifies my old creeds of love. Each day I realize more fully his

sefishness, and sink lower in my own regard for having loved him.

True, honest love, exalts the nature. A passion that degrades one's self, even mentally, should be deplored and eliminated.

We can free our senses from the thralldom of human passion, as surely as we can free our souls from the fetters of exploded faiths.

Had any other interest in life enticed me, I would not have yielded my heart to my lover's subtle and uncertain sway.

The flame from my rose candles touched my lilies at dinner, which led Mrs. Caton to declare that lilies, like virtue, should not be scorched.

A rosy hue suffused Heloise's face at Mrs. Caton's moralism.

Under the influence of the right man the girl might develop into a loving and honest woman. I shall not cease to regret having let her meet Albert Vane.

The right man is a rarer find for a woman than a gem like the Koh-i-noor would be. Possibly we do not recognize or appreciate the right man when he crosses our path; the wrong man is too often more alluring.

We grasp the great luscious roses of life, and pass by the little modest flower, half hidden in its bed of leaves; yet the rose sooner droops and dies in the gas-light glare than the forget-me-not and violet do.

We pay fabulous sums for exotics, and crush the flowers of the field under our heel. We worship art and neglect nature. We pay dearly for human

exotics, and learn only in sorrow and in death the greater value of human blossoms that twine about our hearts and bloom in the sunshine of our love.

Mrs. Caton was more *risque* than usual at dinner. I observed Percy Vaughn wince under the fire of her wit and reckless repartee; yet Vaughn is familiar with the *Café Chantants*, and the *Quartier Latin* of Paris, and has indulged in no end of larks at Vienna and at Buda-Pesth.

"Did you notice," Mrs. Caton questioned, "that Sara Bernhardt as Iseyl seduced every man in the cast? She concealed depravity beneath so langorous a charm that we actually forgave her the seduction. She is one of the few actresses who can sin decently."

"Sara is more wonderful than the Cathode rays," I exclaimed, with the enthusiasm I always feel for the insinuating Frenchwoman. She looks directly into an emotion, and photographs it before our senses. We not only feel it, we *see* it. I really believe that Sara differs from other women in that she has thirty-eight points. Worth decided that most women have thirty-six, and each point must be considered in a study of them for a toilet. The nineteenth century developed many marvels, but none more wonderful than this versatile, mercurial and many-sided actress.

"Do you think her greater than Duse?" Mrs. Fulton asked across the table, where I fancied her quite wrapped up in Fred Manton, who was seated between Heloise and herself.

I told her that I considered Bernhardt more force-

ful and fiery than the Italian actress, whose method and calmness may be more convincing. "We study Duse, we absorb Sara," I said. "The one woman touches our hearts, the other dazzles our senses. We live with her, in the swim and swish of emotion, she affects the brain like absinthe; the art of the other actress cools and steadies the nerves, and is masterful in that it reaches the better part of our nature."

"Sara's arms are so bad," Mrs. Caton laughed.

"Bernhardt is the one imperfect woman who seems perfect," I contended, "and as she is not a skirt dancer like Loie Fuller, the length of her arms does not interfere with the charm of her poses or her acting."

"You mean that *La Loie* dances entirely with her arms?" Heloise asked, with her winsome, irresistible smile.

"She uses her arms to the exclusion of her legs so much in her dances that, in slang phrase, they may be said to cut a greater figure," Mrs. Caton replied to Heloise.

"I am fond of music-halls," the girl declared. "An ordinary society play bores me, and Tragedy is quite impossible in this period."

"I would not like your friends, Sir Henry Irving and Ellen Terry, to hear your confession," I rebukingly said to Heloise.

"That is true, Lenoir," she good-humoredly admitted. "I exclude these artists from my denunciation. My admiration of them personally is so great

that it matters but little to me what they play. Ellen Terry is crystallized sunshine, and Sir Henry is the embodiment of congeniality and of friendliness."

"You pay a gracious tribute," I said, "to two artists most worthy of it, and I will tell you that one secret of Sir Henry Irving's great success is the breadth of nature that enables him to make and retain friends. A secret of Ellen Terry's inimitable sway over the hearts of her admirers of both sexes is her unselfishness and amiability. These qualities, even more than personal magnetism, appeal to those with whom she is brought in contact, and move the multitude."

"Descending from art and artists to ordinary mortals," Mrs. Caton said, "I heard Mr. Chapin tell Mr. Vance this afternoon, that he had taken a great fancy to him on account of his wife. I thought that quite an original compliment."

"A rather obscure one," Heloise interposed.

"Not at all," Mrs. Caton urged. "The greatest compliment in a man's life is his wife."

"Some men consider her the most uncomplimentary thing in it, and desire no more such," Heloise continued, in the *Catonesque* mode of speech which she has adopted of late.

Fred Manton turned his attention to Heloise, from this time until the liqueurs and cigarettes were put on the table. As we dined somewhat *sans ceremonie*, we remained with the men while they smoked, thus depriving them of the opportunity to discuss us.

Mrs. Fulton, although from Chicago, had not learned to smoke, and lighted her maiden cigarette, as Heloise jokingly called it. She soon tossed it, in sorrow, aside. Mrs. Fulton will learn to enjoy a Nestor better if she lingers long in New York.

Chicago, founded on smoke, and thriving upon it, should produce no woman of the Fulton type.

Even Chicago, at times, delights in contrast!

Maurel was not in his best form at dinner. Evidently he had been gambling. This habit affects his brain, as liquor does that of some men.

I often question which vice is the more deplorable; but when I realize that rum destroys a man's *personnel*, and degrades him to the level of a common tramp, I prefer the gambler to the drunkard. The one vice requires brain; the other steals it away.

"I have listened more than mingled in the talk, to-night, my sweetheart," Maurel softly said, as we parted; and the tenderness of his tone sweetened my dreams.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SPARRING MATCH OF WORDS.

"I REALLY did not know that Fred Manton was so amusing as I found him last evening. He seemed to admire me, too," Heloise ingenuously said the following morning to me, as she lounged about my boudoir in a China silk *saute de lit* and puffed at a cigarette.

I have tried to break Heloise from the habit of smoking, it is so injurious to a young girl, and so likely to coarsen her in the eyes of men.

"Practice what you preach," the girl advises me.

I explained to her that my life abroad accustomed me to habits that are not desirable in a girl reared in the greater conventionality of America.

"I consider life here most unconventional," she argued, this morning. "A girl in Europe must be chaperoned; here she can go it alone."

"Not if she be in the social swim," I told Heloise. "The surface of her life must be smooth and white like the frosting on a cake, and instead of going it alone, she is tied to the apron-strings of her chaperon quite as much as abroad."

Heloise gave a Cissy Fitzgerald wink—a newly

acquired accomplishment of hers, and, pulling a rose from my table, she scattered the leaves over her pretty gown.

The girl, as she reclined against the pink cushions of my divan in her pink robe, revealing the gleaming flesh from throat and arm, reminded me of a *La France* rose.

"Was Fred Manton ever fond of *you?*" she inquired, with a curious look out of the corner of her dancing dark eyes.

"Not especially."

"Then why did he give you that turquoise brooch for your birthday?"

"Oh, Fred is an old friend, I might say an old chum of mine, and he is a jolly good fellow with his money," I laughed.

"That is a recommendation; I have found Albert Vane to be quite the reverse."

"He gave you the enamelled clover-leaf," I suggested. My policy with the girl is not to disparage Vane, but to let her discover his selfishness and actual stinginess compared with other men whom she meets.

"Yes, Lenoir, it is true that Albert Vane gave me the little pin, but he had an object in this. I wondered if Fred Manton was ruled by a similar motive."

The girl's language and look implied a confession of herself and a suspicion of me which only her youth could justify.

Experience in the world gives the *finesse* which nature accords only to her feminine masterpieces.

Experience is costly, like gold leaf, but it is essential to the fine framing of the human picture.

We must buy success with youth, and sometimes with faith, but it implies wealth, and power, and freedom. The game *is* worth the candle. It pays to work and wait, to plan and to achieve.

"Would you be pleased for me to fall in love with Fred Manton?" Heloise asked, to my great surprise.

I told her that Fred was not the sort to reciprocate her affection, that he is a typical man-about-town, a club man, with no domestic desires, and most unlikely to marry, having passed through the crucible of several heart-smashing experiences.

"Should I marry Mr. Manton he need not materially change his mode of life. We would live at the Waldorf, and he could still patronize his clubs. We would not be supposed to move into the Provinces; we need not even reside in Orange."

Heloise grows more sarcastic as her episodes increase. Extreme worldliness dominates her, and she measures people by the use they may be to her.

Heloise is the style of girl upon whom men will squander their dollars and their love.

"I want to go to 'The Knickerbocker,' Fred said that he would secure seats for to-morrow evening. Of course I can go without a chaperon," Heloise said, in a musing tone, as she started to leave me.

"Heloise, throughout your life, I fancy that you will follow only the lead of your own sweet will," I replied. "Still, should you decide to permanently

settle on Fred Manton, it might be as well that you throw about you the safeguard of companionship. Fred's opinion of woman is not the most exalted, I regret to say, and it were wise that you foster or humor any faint ideas of their unapproachableness which he may retain. The women of his race have been correct in conduct; they have had on their lives the veneer of society. Fred is partly Bohemian in habits, yet down in his heart lingers the old-time ideas of woman and her sphere. He has some feeling, and great generosity. The right woman might even yet lead him into paths of virtue, and round out his life with healthful pleasure. In Fred you would have two chances,—one for yourself and one for him. With Albert Vane there would be at once and forever in your lives, a regret and a ruin."

"I shall not marry Mr. Vane," the girl declared, with heightening color.

I read Heloise well enough to interpret her motive in planning an alliance with Fred Manton. He has the advantages of family and wealth. How the blue blood of his relatives would curdle at the thought of his marriage to a girl without morals or honor,—a girl whose only dower will be her beauty, with its transitory bloom.

"Why this sudden desire to wed Fred Manton?" I asked.

"I have not decided to marry him; I am ruminating on the possibilities of such an event."

"If you are considering this matter as a business

speculation, why did you suggest falling in love with Fred?"

"Partly to test your sentiments for him, and partly because my heart and imagination are so elastic that I might even take in a love-affair with Mr. Manton."

"You have no heart, Heloise," I declared. "You are slightly affectionate and somewhat sentimental, at times, but the emotion of love will plant no furrows in your face."

"Then I shall retain my looks," the giddy girl decided, as she arose, and, shaking out the laces of her gown, complacently viewed herself in the mirror.

"You will have, in life, the advantage of not fretting. Worry is a greater enemy than time is to beauty."

"Has Vane intimated the catastrophe of marriage to you?" I asked, with almost a sneer.

"Vane said to me that he would marry me if I desired it," the girl answered, with a mocking smile. "I determined then to make a clever marriage—clever from the world's standpoint and from yours, Lenoir, because, despite the wretched folly of your infatuation for Maurel, you will not end your life with him, you are playing a part in a little melodrama, through which a villain stalks and over which possibly a tragedy hovers."

My heart felt a sudden chill at these careless words of a reckless girl,—a chill such as it felt at the prophecy of Mrs. Dreggs.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A TRAGEDY IN HIGH LIFE.

I WAS at an uptown reception this afternoon when I heard of the death of old Moneybags' wife. Poor woman! She was killed by a fall from her carriage.

All the guests discussed the catastrophe. Moneybags' wealth and station made his dead wife an object of commiseration, as in life they had made her an object of envy.

A sudden sweep of a cable-car rattled the brain of the staid English coachman, the footman was not alert at his team, there was a bang and a crash; and the woman in her silken splendor was hurled to her doom.

The heart of the masses is stirred for a moment by these accidents.

Life itself pauses aghast on the threshold of Death! Moneybags was not in love with his wife, but he owed her much, and her exquisite style did him credit. Even the owner of a great race-winner drops a tear when his fine filly falls dead on the track or in the stall.

I shall attend Mrs. Moneybags' funeral. It will be the only tribute I can pay to her memory.

Dear, good little Mrs. Langdon poured tea at the reception to-day, and as I sat near her for a moment she told me her tale of woe. The times were hard, and all her money had to be spent on the pretty daughter.

"I have had no new gown this season," she confessed with a sigh.

"No matter, little woman," I comfortingly declared; "you overshadow other women in the latest and costliest modes. Your gems are the priceless ones of virtue and of sincerity, and you can test the value of the friendship of your followers." I also told her that my own gown was a wreck from last year.

"A beautiful one; indeed all your toilets are a study in fabrics." Mrs. Langdon said, with honest admiration.

I heard by chance that Cecile, her daughter, will have a birthday, this week. I shall send her a dainty cape of chiffon and lace, tied with rose-ribbons. I purchased it for Heloise, but the other girl needs it more; and Fred Manton's gold can pay for the adornment of the woman who will sell her pretty figure to him.

When I make money I always invest it in clothes—they come in conveniently when I am not successful.

Young Wilmore sang a love-ballad this afternoon which entranced a dame of quite fifty years.

"What a lover he would make!" the lady exclaimed, with flashing eye.

All the women who heard her laughed. I inter-

posed. "Why shouldn't this lady appreciate the sentiment of love, and yearn for it?"

"Bah, she is too old!" Mrs. Gray sneered.

"No one is too old to long for, or to win, love," I continued, in defence of the singer's admirer.

"Pshaw! Mrs. Gray means a lover like Faust or Romeo, something melodramatic," Mrs. Cary laughed. "I, at least realize that I am too old for these effects, and I am younger than Mrs. Gray."

"Girls, don't let us wrangle about age," I laughed. "It has its beauties, as youth has, and its superiority in knowledge, which youth is only seeking. Time ripens and mellows the fruit that without its sunshine would remain green and tasteless."

"Madame Vaillant is always philosophical," my friend Mrs. Langdon declared.

I told them of the theatre the other evening, and of Minnie Maddern Fisk's interpretation of "Nora," in "The Doll's House."

"Wasn't it beautiful?" Clinton Thorpe said, with a smile of cultured enthusiasm.

"Ibsen saddens me," I replied. "He makes me think so hard. Thought spoils my looks. Women who care for their looks should not think."

"Seriously, madame, do you not adore Ibsen, and isn't Nora a wonderful study?"

"Yes, Clinton, I agree with you, that 'Nora' is a study of emotions, to be comprehended only by women who have suffered as she did—women misplaced in the great play of Life—miscast, I might say,

who are rudely awakened by a shock similar to that which transfixed and overwhelmed the poor little woman in 'The Doll's House.' How many women and men too bartered their birthright for a mess of pottage, and how few have had the courage of their convictions, to begin first of all the study of themselves. It seems to me that since Shakespeare, Henrik Ibsen has best understood and portrayed the emotions of the human heart, as regulated by that infallible chronometer—the human brain."

"You would have made a good actress, Madame Vaillant," Clinton Thorpe commented.

"I make a better critic," I returned. "The rôle is easier, and I prefer Life's softest spots. I am not a worker, only a pitiful idler through the world."

"The appreciation of genius is almost as rare as its possession," said Thorpe.

To-night, sitting alone amid the ruins of my life, the thought comes to me that possibly Clinton's surmise was correct. I might have been a successful actress. I do not deprecate the stage as a refuge from *ennui* for women who weary of their husbands and their social routine. It oftentimes is a quick road to fame and fortune; but I realize that the little child born almost in the footlight glare, and trained amid the labyrinth of the stage and its setting, has a likelier beginning than the social doll, with her accomplishments and charms. For the women used to the slow swing of ball-room grace, and the studied smile of a drawing-room, the stage holds out an al-

luring, yet too often disappointing, career, the social demands of high fashion are extreme ; the treadmill is ceaseless ; yet it does not equal the more pitiless one of the stage to women who think and work and plan for its potent successes.

A present queen of comic opera not long since, like a shooting star flashing through the theatrical sky, and sinking into obscurity, declared that work and caretaking and hard study should lift her again into the brilliancy of the dramatic firmament. With a flash of her violet eyes, and a toss of her shining hair, she registered an oath to win the greatest prize which *opera bouffe* offered. "I will become the queen of comic opera, and a princess of that half-world, where men shower gold and jewels and roses, on such women as I shall be. I will reign in the domain of light song, and win a millionaire with my laurels."

Eight years have gone by since the singer made her vow. She worked and waited and won !

I wonder what is left in life for me to win ?

I have run the gamut of love, fashion, and wealth. Remains there for me a new note to touch in life's chromatic scale ? Maurel's love—*pianissimo !* Moneybags' position—*fortissimo !* I will strike *that* note, and drown with its brazen sound, all the softer cadences of my heart memories.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A FUNERAL IN SOCIETY.

THE church was thronged with the high priestesses of fashion at the funeral of Mrs. Moneybags. She would have enjoyed the *éclat* of her obsequies. Can the dead penetrate material surroundings with the spiritual eye?

I sat quite still while the music wailed and throbbed through the vast cathedral aisles. The pomp and splendor of nature were without; the pomp and glory of religion were within—the chanting choristers, the robed priest, the kneeling multitude.

The dead woman lay white and cold with folds of soft crêpe crossing her breast, and a bunch of violets in her hands, bared of their priceless gems, and wearing only the thin golden circlet of her bridal day.

Devoid of the appointments of wealth; without the fine laces that empresses had worn to court balls; without the rubies and pearls and diamonds of her splendid parures; without the shimmering satins of her gowns the beautiful fine-blooded queen of the *haute monde* lay in her long, dreamless sleep, robed in the simplicity of her girlhood.

I knew that the violets on her breast had come from

her husband, they were her favorite flower; she had worn them always on the drive and in the ball-room. Sympathy filled my heart for the woman so cold and still. Death is a tragedy to the successful!

Moneybags' face was rigid, like that of the dead. He has no heart; the getting of wealth has frozen its fountains; but the sudden severing of a bond like marriage should have brought a tear to the eyes of even so hardened a sinner as old Moneybags.

A glint of sunshine stole through the stained glass windows of the church and fell as a benediction on the face of the dead. The effect was so beautiful that it touched my heart as the smile of God might have done.

The music of the anthem of sorrow swelled through the church; the perfume of the flowers floated out on the incense laden air; the coffin was born reverently into the sunshine of the spring day, which was fair as if dropped from the heart of a careless June.

Women of fashion entered their crested carriages, and were whirled from the darkened cathedral into the light and color and charm of the Park's enticing driveway. Life swept Death out of the heart, and the thrilling episode of the woman's doom was forgotten.

Heloise and I saw Fred Manton and Maurel on the Avenue; we stopped the brougham and accepted their invitation to luncheon at the Plaza Hotel.

"We can have a good luncheon there, and you ladies can then continue your drive while we men take a constitutional in the Park," Fred suggested.

"I thought *you* cared only for the Avenue and your Club windows," I said to Fred, as we seated ourselves in the Cupid room of the Plaza's splendid *à la carte suite.*

"I am taking to nature, of late," Fred replied, glancing somewhat sentimentally at Heloise. The girl is one of nature's *chef-d'œuvres.*

"The superb location and exquisite *cuisine* of the Plaza surpasses any of New York's great hotels," observed Maurel.

"Three vermouth cocktails," was Manton's order to the waiter.

"Why three?" Maurel questioned.

"I will join you in Chablis, but I am trying to stop drinking cocktails and straight whisky."

"Since when?" laughed Maurel.

"Since I made a fool of myself the night before last, by smashing the windows of a cab, and spending a hundred dollars for a supper that I didn't want, and with people for whom I didn't care. I think that I sowed my last wild oat then, and trust it will not come up a tare."

"Are you really *very* fast, Fred?" Heloise asked, with the innocent look in her eyes which completely deceives people.

"That depends on what you mean by fast. I am like the other fellows, I suppose. My pace isn't much slower. "I have vices, without being vicious."

"Fred is all right," Maurel joined in; he isn't full

much oftener than the moon is, and he always wins at play. He is what the world calls lucky."

"I really wonder if there *is* much in that word luck?" Heloise musingly said.

I told the girl that I could not reply to her question, that it was a problem which has puzzled many wiser than ourselves.

"Luck is luck," Maurel soliloquized, glancing out on the moving panorama in front of the beautiful Plaza.

"I think that the correct interpretation of luck is taking advantage of opportunity," said Fred.

"Possibly you are right," Maurel acquiesced. "I have permitted the golden chances of my life to slip through my fingers."

My clairvoyant instinct, intensified by my experience and knowledge of the man's career, made me feel that Maurel's assertion was false.

The little voice which often warns me whispered then that I was to Maurel only a golden chance in life, a woman to be deceived and used and forgotten.

Lenoir Vaillant has led, rather than followed men. Why should she humor the whims of a dissolute Frenchman?

Two people passed the hotel, just then, and bowed to our party. We violated the proprieties by signalling the couple to join us within. They surprised us with the acknowledgment of their forthcoming marriage.

"We shall make a departure in marriage," the

quaint little figure declared. "I shall continue to live alone, and receive my new husband, by card only."

"You will change your name, yet save your character," I asserted.

"Possibly so; but this question involves that of whether marriage really *does* save a woman's character," the girl cleverly rejoined.

"The character of a girl who marries should defy criticism," said Fred Manton.

"Why hers more than that of the man whom she weds?" I asked.

"Because a man's wife is the mother of his children, and upon her purity his future and that of his offspring depends."

"The blood in the veins of his children is that of the father, as well as that of the mother. If either be poisoned by folly and sin, the heritage of worthlessness and of woe must fall to the lot of their children," I declared.

"Women are what men make them," Maurel decided, with the gallantry of the French.

"Men are what women would *not* have them be," I rejoined.

"Were men's lives built on the lines that women lay down, the dear creatures would weary of our perfections," replied Maurel.

Possibly this is true; we tire of the mental *chateaux* that we build; the fine lines of our imagination form a web, like that of the spider, into which we allure

the male fly; when he comes into the little web, after many wanderings, the idea of his bondage often tempts us to tear the dainty fabric aside with a sweep of the hand; as men do, we, also, desire pursuit."

I think Maurel's influence over me must have waned, ere thoughts like these could fill my brain. Gold has been the nightmare of my life. Since the olden days when Vaillant fell dead, with a blackened past, and a fortune in debts for his monument, I have struggled in the throes of this monster—gold. It has sapped the joy from my youth, and embittered my fairest love-dreams. It has implanted in my heart envy of more fortunate women, whose pleasure in life has been that of splendor, rather than that of getting money. I think when the great roll-call shall sound, beyond the silence of death, the women who will be promoted to the foremost ranks of heaven will be those that have not trailed their youth and beauty and fair fame through the mire of life's vicissitudes, but who have been nurtured on success, and worn always the cloak of a protecting love.

Heloise will marry Fred Manton; she charms him. Fred knows well the world of womankind. He might be termed. "The Squire of Dames," yet Fred will wed a girl because her cheeks are ruddy, and her eyes are bright, and her crisp *mots* amuse him.

The man is weary of women of the world; women with stories of intrigue and unholy loves; he wants in his life a flavor of inocence, so he seeks to plant in the garden of his heart a little wild rose like Heloise.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A BROKERS SUNDAY "AT HOME."

How much sport some people miss by not knowing what goes on in this big town! I went with Miss Knowington to an "at home" last Sunday afternoon. The house was that of a broker recently enriched by successful operations on "the street."

The man's tastes are simple as to his mode of life six days in the week; but on the seventh he gives his friends a royal good time.

The house is adorned with modern art. The floors are covered with costly Indian rugs. The walls are hung with tapestries and Spanish leather; cosy nooks are filled with soft cushions, and draped with foreign stuffs. Pictures of footlight celebrities are framed between panelled paintings of modern subjects. From the marbled entrance to the mahogany buffet in the miniature bar-room, all is new. The Raines law does not affect this most inviting social resort.

Orchestral music enlivens the guests; a woman of spotless morality receives them. In the gorgeous drawing-room they assemble, and wander thence to explore the picturesque scenes beyond. Fragrance enriches the air, and the fountain spray falls from the uplifted hands of a marble cupid.

So entrancing did Mrs. Goodwin find this little god of Love, that she tumbled into his arms, mistaking her bearings, with possible memories of a Turkish plunge.

There was a scream, a half-smothered laugh, and the woman lay, in her latest Paris gown, chest deep in the water. She was fished out by the munificent host and barred from results of her soak by a hot whisky.

I sympathized with the woman, on account of the steely front which her bodice presented. Water is fatal to this sort of trimming, and Mrs. Goodwin's heart can be touched only through her clothes. It was really a very droll incident, and quite varied the usual tenor of gossip.

A novel feature of the Sunday show is that of the services of Mr. Newman's office-staff at his weekly functions. One man passes on the eligibility of the guests, another points out the curios of the *ménage*, a third tends bar.

To the credit of the guests be it said, the hospitality of this bar is never abused.

Miss Knowington is quite a favorite character of New York society. She is clever enough to go in several sets, which welcome her because of her refined nature and crisp *badinage*. She possesses the rare faculty of not boring people with stale stories and worthless gossip, having always a fresh *morceau* in her collection.

I heard to-day that Mrs. Lynch deserted Albert

Vane's office for that of the dashing broker, Mr. Thorley. Vane had made love to her money, and her commissions were a fine perquisite for him.

Mrs. Lynch is of the stunning blonde type that catches the fancy of most brokers. She made quite a fortune on good information, then took it to Paris to spend. Returning, she went again to Wall Street to make more money. Albert Vane led her astray, though this seems scarcely possible after three years of Parisian life. As she remargined her stocks, her smiles for Vane grew less fond, their luncheons together became less frequent, until she began to nibble at the more attractive bait held out by Broker Thorley. Her shining, copper tea-kettle, her Russian tea and her sumptuous self were removed from the offices of Bull & Bear to those of Thorley, a few blocks above. As Mrs. Lynch is a plunger in stocks, young Thorley has struck it rich.

This uptown branch is merely incidental in the great business career of this ambitious broker, whose offices are fitted up regardless of expense, whose views on the street are considered proverbs, and whose close ally is the silent partner of an equally ambitious Consolidated house.

In this silent man's more silent office, in the rear of the suite, these two young men plan and scheme to outwit older heads and maturer judgment. Their motto is "get rich, at *any* price." They live and drive and dress *en prince*.

Some one has hoodooed me, as the New Orleans

darkies say. I must get a fetish. Since Solon Maurel crossed the disk of my life, it has seemed spotted and blurred. In theatrical slang, he has "queered" me. This feeling regarding one's lover is unfortunate. My star of success is clouded. *I* should not make losses. My information and experience are too large for that.

Here is a note from Maurel, sent in a box of Brigman's violets.

"*Ma Mignonne:*

"Possibly you will think that even violets have thorns, when you pluck from the depth of their sweetness, this request, for one hundred dollars to be returned shortly, with interest, in kisses warm from the heart and the lips of

"Yours always,

"SOLON."

This letter implies a command, amid its studied tenderness.

I dislike financial transaction with Maurel; they cloud my horoscope. He recalls more and more to me the Dreggs woman's prediction. Well, money is easier than love to win; a hundred dollars means to me only a point in a stock; to Maurel it may imply success or ruin.

Ever the fatal game goes on; the coffers of the bank are bursting with ill-gotten gold. The gamester in cards and the gambler in stocks are alike. The road leads to the same ending—defeat and ruin.

CHAPTER XXX.

MRS MALLORY HAUNTS LENOIR'S DREAMS.

FRED MANTON sent Heloise a bicycle. These two seem getting on rather well. A marriage between them really would not surprise me.

Heloise is a most fortunate girl; as my star is setting hers rises in the sky of financial success.

I once dreamt of possibilities in the girl's future. I determined on a brilliant marriage for her. This hope she nearly thwarted by her recklessness. Fred Manton seemed to drift naturally toward her as a flower inclines to the sun.

The great good luck of Heloise's life lifts her over any abyss. The evil influences of mine tend to sink me into depths out of which I cannot rise. How can I solve this problem of fate?

Heloise's nature is as tropical as my own, but she has herself better in hand. Experience teaches me nothing, I lavish my love and my life on objects most unworthy. Solon Maurel will drain the last dollar from my purse and the last drop of blood from my heart, and crush from my breast its final hope, while Heloise's clearer brain will lead her to success. I presume that this is good judgment rather than luck.

The thought that Maurel might bring a little lost happiness back to my heart has vanished; I cling to him only because I am utterly adrift without him. Had my nature been of the commonplace kind which leads women into life's calmest channels, I could find interest in the social routine that satisfies most women. Unfortunately a restiveness similar to that which sways Maurel permeates my nature, and forces me to the same pursuits and follies that will ruin him.

Heloise just came in my rooms, attired in her natty bicycle suit, ready for a spin up the Boulevard with her lover.

"Why don't you learn to ride?" she asked.

"I told her that carriage riding suited me better. Like Mrs. Steele, I prefer repose in my pleasures. I do not admire women on the wheel; yet I recognize its benefits for them. A woman never presents a more charming picture than when beautifully gowned and seated in an open carriage.

I went with Maurel to an evening reception at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. We met Mr. Chapin in one of the galleries, and discussed with him my favorite paintings by Cabanel.

Mr. Chapin is nothing if not coarse, and not having been through the art exhibition of the museum, of late, he inquired of me if there was anything new in nudes. I sent him in search of several which I warmly commended to his inspection.

The rubicund old beau shortly returned to us with

a disappointed look, and declared his inability to discover the nudes.

"Oh, at your approach, they put on their clothes," I laughed.

"One of the pleasures of your life is guying me," said Mr. Chapin. "Suppose I should ask your views on marriage for me?"

"I would say that I always considered you most friendly to my sex, and wonder what women have done to you that you should desire to punish one of them."

"You are severe but truthful; still I thought that the diversion of marriage might amuse me, and I could offer, in return, a good old name, which has no smirch upon it. I might also give a little affection—that is as much I am capable of.

"What return would you expect from the fair lady?" I asked.

"Youth, love, and some money," Mr. Chapin modestly admitted. "At twenty-five, a man craves only affection from the girl of his choice; at thirty-five, he prefers money with love; at forty-five he wants a combination of youth, love, and money."

"What are his desires in this respect at fifty-five?" Maurel quizzingly inquired.

"Marriage should have become to him then only a forlorn hope. In his heart may be a prayer of thanks for escape from it, or a pang of regret that he missed its charm. These two sentiments are actuated by the class of women who have ruled the man's life."

Mr. Chapin is sensitive as to his age. He declares that he is twenty-one and upwards. At sixty and upwards a bit of boyish sentimentality lingers in his heart amid his cynical beliefs. Neither Mrs. Steele nor Mr. Chapin will outlive romance; nor should they. It is the perfume of life.

"I did not attribute sentiment to our friend, Mr. Chapin," Maurel declared, with his usual sarcasm.

I told him that I had seen Mr. Chapin in love more than once during the past few years, but his affairs of the heart were as the ladies' chain in the lancers—a constant change.

"Yes, Madame Vaillant has seen me under the influence of several infatuations; but a man is not at his best unless in love," Mr. Chapin gallantly said.

"A man is at his very worst, when in love," Maurel declared.

"By the way, I hear that Moneybags has lost interest in life since the death of his charming wife," Mr. Chapin said with a twinkle in his bold blue eyes.

"The lady must have been a good investment for him," said Maurel.

"I will wager that the old gentlemen will reinvest his capital in a similar security," Mr. Chapin retorted, with a meaning glance at me.

Maurel flushed, and proposed a stroll through the galleries. As I walked between the two men, I told them that I reminded myself of a Club sandwich.

"We confess that we are as dough in your hands," laughed Chapin. "Indeed I often am inspired to

enter the race for you, though I fear with small chances of success against so many rivals."

"I might form a marriage syndicate," I laughed.

Maurel was rather moody, as we drove home. He confessed to me that Mrs. Mallory had bothered him of late with notes containing half-concealed threats which made him nervous.

"Women who make threats rarely execute them," I told Maurel.

He said I did not realize what sort of woman Mrs. Mallory was. "She has the temper of a devil," he declared.

"I do not fear her," I insisted, yet my dreams that night were haunted with visions of a haggard woman, with wicked eyes, and a sneer of triumph on her bloodless lips.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HELOISE'S STAR RISES.

MAUREL has been the fatality of my life. My star set when Herbert Lee died. His love was an amulet. Had he lived to encircle me with his protecting arms, and to flood my life with the halo of his love, the happiness I pictured might have been realized.

Solon Maurel is to me a stimulant which intoxicates for the moment, and destroys in the end. The retrospect of my life proves to me that I loved only one man, who took with him my heart in his journey across the dark river of Death.

Heloise was brought home to-day in a cab. Fred Manton rushed up to my rooms with tears in his voice, which begged me to go to the girl. She had fallen from her wheel, and he feared that she had sustained a severe injury.

Heloise was as white as death when I met her, just as the attendants lifted her from the cab. She smiled wanly into my face. Heloise collapses under trouble or pain.

I doubt if strength be well in women. Their weakness appeals to men more than their strength does.

Fred Manton affects weak women. He deludes himself with the idea that mental and moral strength belong exclusively to men.

Comprehending that the girl was suffering from only a sprained ankle and some bruises, I wired my *masseuse* to attend her, and after settling her comfortably amid a lot of cushions, I called Fred Manton into my boudoir and asked him quite frankly what were his intentions towards the girl.

"I want to marry her," Fred admitted, with his sunny smile. He went on to explain that having felt for me only sentiments of friendship, and having run the gauntlet of deception in many women, he fancied that the surest road to happiness lay in the innocence of youth.

"This girl has not lived in a Puritanical atmosphere. She has some unfortunate qualities which have not been improved by her associations, but she is warm-hearted and sincere, and very beautiful. I think I can mould her into an almost perfect woman," Fred complacently avowed.

Visions of the Manton wealth, and the Manton name flashed through my brain. My oath of placing Heloise well in life, had its final chance of fulfilment. The nightmare of Albert Vane's transitory charm for the girl was replaced by the brilliant picture of an alliance with the Manton millions.

"You have chosen wisely, Fred," I said, "and my chief desire is to facilitate this marriage."

"Do you think Heloise loves me?" Fred asked, with a doubt on his handsome face.

"Undoubtedly she does," I replied. "Otherwise why should she encourage your attentions? The world of mankind is open to her. With her beauty she can pick and choose from its numbers."

"Your knowledge of men will make you marvel at my infatuation for a young girl when you recall my career with women," Fred said, with a laugh.

I told Fred that my studies of men taught me to copper their most pronounced views.

"This implies a doubt of my choice in Heloise," Fred demurred.

Taking his hand, I said, with as honest a ring as my voice could acquire, "Fred, I think Heloise and you are suited in temperament and tastes. These features go far towards the fulfilment of the promises of marriage. Heloise will bring you, not wealth, but beauty for her *dot*. Your riches can decorate this beauty, and foster the girl's innate purity. Beauty is the highest trump in a woman's game; I am pleased that Heloise possesses it. It is to youth as the morning dew is to the rose."

"Heloise possesses more potent charms than beauty, she has wit and sweetness of nature," Fred declared with enthusiasm.

My heart warmed for this old friend of my more reckless days.

"Since you quiz me, I will turn the tables on you,

and inquire what are your intentions toward Solon Maurel?" Fred jokingly said.

"That is the twentieth-century way of putting it," I laughed. "Why not ask what his intentions toward me are?"

"I have already guessed them," my friend replied, in a tone which did not indicate approval of them.

Fred Manton does not admire the Frenchman. He is too good an American to accord with the selfish nature and habits that conduce to the wholesale using of women by foreigners.

American-born, yet cosmopolitanly educated, men sometimes shatter the fortunes of their mothers and their wives, but to the credit of the men of our nation, these occurrences are infrequent.

Man's province is to fill the larder and the exchequer. Woman's mission is to lighten and brighten these duties for him.

A woman told me that she allows her husband three per cent. of his income for spending money, with five dollars extra on Saturday. Instead of this being pin money, it might be termed "balling" money. All the week this genius of the pen keeps sober, but on Saturday he "balls off" the boys. Possibly did this thrifty wife not hold the purse-strings, she would go hungry and unclothed.

A woman requires remarkable adaptability to live harmoniously with such a life-partner. She has to supply brains and heart and moral force to maintain

domestic relations which at times must be most disappointing.

Fred Manton kept Heloise's toilet table fragrant with roses during the tiresome days of her temporary seclusion.

"We are whiling away the hours instead of wheeling them away," Heloise said, when her lover passed the evening with her instead of going to his club.

The softening effect of youth and loveliness is apparent on Fred. Extreme solicitude for the girl of his heart has replaced his former restiveness. I think the young man has at last found his match.

Heloise now wears Fred Manton's betrothal ring. It is a ruby mounted in diamonds. The stones are of great value, and their brightness is symbolic of the girl's future.

Fred's good qualities and indulgence do not win the heart of Heloise. To him she is all smiles, but I sometimes see a wee cloud upon her fair brow, which suggests to me the shadow of regret for Albert Vane.

She is incapable of love. Her feelings never can rise beyond the flesh; and the fetter which bound her to Vane was of its forging.

Fred's people have not recognized the engagement which exists between Fred and Heloise Neville. It is possible that they never will, yet the girl's beauty should win them as it did their son.

Their opposition will have no weight with this pampered heir to their wealth. Since boyhood his

will has been as law to his mother and sister; this is the first serious clash that they have felt.

As is usual when love steers the wheel, the little life-craft will run into smooth waters. The proud Mantons will yield to its gentle yet forceful touch, and in the end they will accept both the wife of their son and her friend.

CHAPTER XXXII.

DECEPTION BENEATH THE MASK OF LOVE.

THESE long, golden May days should bring gladness to every one. Nature's smile found its reflection in my heart in the olden days, when I courted it amid dewy mornings in the crisp, luscious air of the mountains of Switzerland or by the placid waters of Lucerne. I used to revel in the brightness of Nature's marvellous charm along the Elysée or in the Bois. I delighted in summer mornings at Trouville or Dieppe, with the sea flashing in the sun and the blue sky above and the pretty women and children, with their *bonnes*, listening to the music, or strolling along the beach.

The restiveness of travel is upon me. Women of my nature require perpetual motion. I sometimes feel that I could wander forever from ocean to ocean, exploring new lands and living new lives; again my spirit craves the quiet of a mountain retreat or a little village, white and quaint, nestling in a valley sheltered from the world by encircling hills.

I am weary of the rush of New York. The excitement of stock speculation wears on my nerves and racks my brain. The worry of my association with Maurel is greater than is its pleasure. I often

wonder why I was born, yet I feel that I will continue to exist throughout endless ages. The craving for love seems to have left my heart. I cannot tell *what* I long for *now*, maybe it is only for rest! I *must* have the blue devils to-day. The chatter of Heloise might arouse me to interest in the life which looks to me so hopeless. I am not *en rapport* with people who are away up or away down in spirits. This temperament indicates a weak nature. *My* spirits seem of late to be permanently down.

I must shake off this apathy, even though it be with stimulants. The foreboding which overpowers me *must* have a meaning, and unless my premonitions err, its meaning relates to Solon Maurel! I recall writing of him as being at once my life's charm and its sorrow. I might write of him now as its sorrow alone. It puzzles me to define when the charm ceased and the sorrow began. This is an unsolved riddle in the hearts of most women who have loved!

Unlike nature's beauties which are subject to renewal, the flower of love fades and blooms no more. A suspicion, a word light as a zephyr, may kill love. A corpse in its shroud is not colder than is a dead passion.

Heigh-ho! I have here another sweet missive from my lover.

"*Ma Cherie:*

"I write to ask you and Heloise to join me in a box party at The Olympia to-night. Manton will meet

us. I 'phoned him that I had just secured the box. It is nice to be in love as Fred is with his sweetheart and as I am with mine. Will you again accommodate me with a green bill of three figures, which I am sure of doubling for you as well as for myself ?

"Look your handsomest, and believe, until I can in words express my thanks and love, that I am

"Ever your own,

"SOLON."

Tuesday.

After reading this note I walked the floor for five minutes : then I made an absinthe *frappé*.

It required three cigarettes to calm me, and I even called my wee dog Yvette to my rescue. I felt like dashing both the animal and myself out of the window !

This sudden change from the sentimentalism of my former mood was of benefit to me. Two *frappés* stimulated me sufficiently to send for Heloise and to begin my toilet for a drive in the Park.

Women often give ungrudgingly of their possessions to the men whom they love, but they wince at a *demand* from these men upon their purses. It hurts as the sharp edge of a knife blade might hurt if stuck into the flesh !

Upon the advent of Heloise, in her crisp, silken gown and big, rose-covered hat, my composure had so far returned as to decide me not to accede to the request of Maurel.

Heloise was radiant with pleasure during the variety performance at The Olympia, and she indulged in more than her share of champagne cocktails.

"Would that I could change my character as easily and as often as Fregoli does!" she exclaimed.

"I would not care to have you change your character, at all," Heloise's lover gallantly declared.

"Oh, I could improve upon it," she retorted. "I would give it the gorgeous coloring of Fregoli's costumes."

"Neutral tints are often more desirable in the character of a woman," Maurel ventured.

"I would not have grays and tans in mine. I prefer rainbow hues and the coloring of the pea-fowl," the girl persisted. "I was created for the glare and glitter of life!"

The self-knowledge which Heloise possesses is the chief factor in her success. She is artfully artful. I noticed that she beamed with more than usual complaisance on Solon. The thought came to me that with her avariciousness for men she was posing for Maurel's admiration equally with that of Fred.

Personal vanity is insatiable with Heloise. Not all the society men of the city could gratify it. It is like the unquenchable thirst which consumes men and leads them from theatres to salons. Heloise has somewhat the nature of a man with all her woman's weaknesses. Possibly my nature is similar to hers!

I noticed that Maurel touched the tip of Heloise's

foot, as it peeped from beneath her lace-trimmed petticoat. Had Fred Manton seen this there would have been a war, but not "A Merry One." Fred is himself too honest to indulge suspicion of other men, but I feel that his instincts against Maurel are justified.

"The increasing success of Vaudeville proves that Americans grow more cosmopolitan in amusements as they do in all their customs," I remarked.

"New York is becoming more like Paris, yet there is a void in my heart which only Paris can fill," Maurel said, in his most languid tone.

"Paris will be to me as near heaven as I shall ever reach," Heloise sighed.

"Then you shall shortly be in heaven," Fred said under his breath to the girl.

Heloise blushed.

As my eyes wandered over the brilliant music-hall scene, with the white and gold of its decorations and the smiling women in their flashing gowns, they rested on the vulgar face of Mrs. Mallory. Two men and a still more *déclassé* woman were sipping wine, most likely at the expense of Maurel's former mistress.

I directed Maurel's attention to her.

"Mrs. Mallory looks more dissipated than she did a few months ago," I commented.

"She drinks more," was Maurel's reply. "Let us change the subject, Lenoir," he said, rather nervously; "give us something original to make us laugh."

"The performance should do that. I came here to be amused, not to amuse. Besides, I haven't an idea," I declared.

"Never have I seen you without ideas, and novel ones at that," Fred joined in.

"What is an idea?" Heloise questioned in an attempt to corner me.

"An idea is a want. At my birth I had wants, so I must have had ideas. Women have more ideas than men because they have more wants, at least this is what men declare."

"What is your idea now, what is your chief want?" Fred good-naturedly asked.

"It is that great want which fills the heart of all the world—the wish for happiness," I replied, glancing directly into my lover's eyes.

A flush mounted to Maurel's brow, not a royal flush, which would have delighted him, but a flush of shame!

The music of the orchestra rang joyously through the splendid hall; the swish of women's robes and the jingle of their laughter fell on my ears, but aroused no echo in my heart. Again I looked into the box where the haggard face of Mrs. Mallory gleamed like that of a hunted animal, for she had seen Maurel and me. Fiercer grew her eyes, redder her cheeks. She leaned over the box, and fixing her gaze upon Maurel, the woman hissed the one word: "Blackguard!"

Maurel's face assumed an ashen hue.

"Let us go to some quiet place for supper," he

whispered to me. "I don't like the look in Minnie Mallory's eyes to-night."

Maurel was a sorry host at supper. He drank much, but ate little, and the strange whiteness did not leave his face.

"Have you fear of Mrs. Mallory?" I said to him as he tied my wrap about my throat.

He laughed sarcastically and answered, "I know no fear of *any* woman; but the devil was in Minnie Mallory's eyes to-night!"

Sympathy for the man touched my heart. I drew a jewel from my finger to give him to raise money on; then the thought of the touch which he had given to the foot of Heloise barred all the flood-gates of my tenderness. I replaced the ring upon my finger.

Again I passed a restless night with feverish dreams.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE HISTORY OF HELOISE.

FRED MANTON called to-day, and wrote on his card the request to see me alone. "What is up?" I thought. "Can Fred and Heloise have quarrelled already, in the new moon of their love?"

"I wished to see you *alone*, because I would talk with you of Solon Maurel," said Fred.

"Why of Maurel?" I hesitatingly inquired.

"See here, Lenoir," Fred said, softly stroking my hand, "you are my sort of woman. Had your experiences been less varied I would have been hopelessly in love with you, but your views of life are too positive for me. I prefer to mould a woman's tastes to my own."

"Pray don't apologize, Fred," I suggested, withdrawing my hand from his. "In matters of the heart we would not have suited one another. Your latest sweetheart is quite adapted to you."

Fred laughed, the jolly, little laugh of good fellowship that goes to my heart and inspires the hope that he may never laugh less lightly.

"I have not professed friendship for Maurel, hence I do not violate its pledges in expressing to you my distrust of him," Fred went on to say.

"Since you have placed yourself beyond the accusation of jealousy, I must listen to your reasons for this distrust," I acquiesced.

"Women are not alone in instinct. Mine warns me that trouble awaits continuance of your relations with this Frenchman," my visitor declared.

I asked Fred if his dreams had been bad as mine were last night.

"I am too happy to have other than sweet dreams," Fred sentimentally avowed. "But men judge men outside of a woman's presence, and the measurements that I took of Maurel after we left you last night did not please me. Selfishness is characteristic of the French, but this man inspires me as more than commonly wrapped up in himself. I did not like his allusions to Heloise. His cynicism regarding women will bring trouble to him some day. My intentions towards Heloise are honorable. I am desirous of paying her the compliment of giving my name to her."

"Do you desire for me a similar compliment from Maurel?" I smilingly inquired.

"By no means!" Fred said, with fervor.

"You disapprove of marriage for me?" I persisted.

"I disapprove of sacrifice for you," Fred returned. "Marriage is too beautiful a relationship to be degraded by insincerity or infidelity."

I sighed for the future of the dashing young man who had given its fairest promises into the keeping of Heloise.

Heaven help all men and women who build their mental and moral structures upon the sand of Fancies. The pitiless winds of disappointment moan about them ; the waves of distrust beat upon the fair fabrics of their dreams, and Life's fiercest storms at last float them out into Life's deepest and blackest ocean of Regret.

Again Fred spoke, as with the voice of warning and of inspiration :

"Your association with Maurel will bring you sorrow and will have a tragic termination. He is nervous as to the designs of Mrs. Mallory. He drank heavily last night, and referred to the woman many times. Maurel usually is a bluffer and his unrest indicated mental disturbance. I gathered that he fears harm to you or to himself, through this woman's jealousy."

I thanked Fred and assured him that fear with me was a feeling of the past.

"I, too, have presentiments of evil that this woman may do," I shudderingly said, "but the harm will come to Maurel!"

Fred Manton drew nearer to me and besought me with feeling to give up the acquaintance of Maurel. He anticipated much annoyance from Mrs. Mallory and sorrow and regret to me as the outcome of the friendship.

"I think you are right, Fred," I admitted. "Regret is the monument which time has reared above the dead pleasures and forgotten follies of my life."

"In matters of the heart women rarely follow their judgment," Fred regretfully said. "You think my counsel wise, but will you heed it?"

"I make no promise. I will float along with the tide. It is too late for me to shape the course of my own destiny," I sadly declared.

"It is never too late for a woman to save herself," Fred sighed.

"We must not indulge in too much sentiment, Fred," I declared. "We will send for Heloise."

"Who *is* Heloise?"

"What do you mean, Fred?" I asked, turning sharply upon him.

"I mean that I have been too much attracted by Heloise to question her birth or her blood. Nor would I now except to satisfy the curiosity or the interest of my family regarding the girl whom I hope to wed."

I told Fred that Heloise Neville was born in New Orleans of an aristocratic father and rather plebeian mother, who died young, leaving to this girl the heritage of her beauty. I did not admit that the mother of Heloise had been a variety actress, and that her lover married her on her death-bed, that the girl-child might bear his name. Nor did I offer the information that Neville was thrown over by his people for having done the only decent deed of all his life.

Continuing the tale, I told him that an aunt of Heloise's father, attracted by the child's beauty, took

charge of her education and offered her a home with her in the old French Quarter. Strangely, the child advanced to girlhood in the atmosphere of a convent and amid the quaintness of this Southern home, with its antique furnishings of half a century back.

The old lady loved the girl in an undemonstrative fashion, and she left her some antique gems, and sufficient money, in trust, to give her quite a fair income.

"Where did you first meet her and what forged the bond of friendship between you?" Fred asked, with deepening interest.

"You wonder that the Nevilles would entrust the daughter of their son to a woman with such a record as mine?" I rather sneeringly said.

"You misinterpret me," Fred feelingly declared. "I will drop the subject. I care too much for my sweetheart to probe a past in which she had no choice. I am content with the knowledge that she is of respectable birth, and as to her income, of course I am utterly indifferent. I prefer that my wife receive all the good things of the world from me alone."

It surprised me that Fred did not question me as to the father of his *fiancée;* but he was silent.

I could have loved this man had I realized his nobility in the past as now.

I felt it my duty to inform this ardent lover that Heloise's father was not dead, but practically lost to his people amid the wilds of Montana. Neville went out there to take charge of a mine that failed in re-

sults, and he remained there in silence, so far as his daughter was concerned.

"Does Heloise love her father?" Fred questioned.

"Not in the least," I replied. "Being independent of him, she is satisfied that he makes no claim upon her."

I persisted in imparting to Fred the information that I had first known Heloise in New Orleans at the home of her aunt, and that after the death of this lady the girl wished to come to New York with me on my return, after a visit to the birthplace of my mother. I did not add that I had known Neville in Europe years before, when he dashed from spa to spa, and from one capital to another, in the mad pursuit of pleasure, and perchance of forgetfulness of the beautiful woman whom, all too late, he had made his wife.

The little sentiment which Heloise possesses is inherited from her mother, who was madly infatuated with Neville, and singularly enough was true to him. Her worst qualities come from her father, if indeed there be anything in the idea of inherited habits or vices.

Fred told me that Heloise had spoken of her father as a successful mining man, and that beyond this he had not pressed the subject of her family.

We sent for the girl, who quickly joined us with the suspicion of a frown on her white brow. This wretched jealousy of hers is an equal inheritance with her beauty from the impassioned woman who gave

her birth and who rests beyond all human sorrow in her Southern grave.

Fred soon drove the frown from his sweetheart's face with the suggestion of a drive and a dinner at Claremont.

I anticipated a call from old Moneybags that evening, and I replied to a note of request from Maurel for my society at dinner, with a denial of his wish.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE VOICE OF WARNING.

A WEEK has passed since I saw Solon Maurel. He was indignant that his slave failed to do his bidding, both in the loan of money and in joining him at dinner.

The influence of this man is silently fading from my life, yet there is within it a void which my fancy for him partially filled.

It is woman's nature to love some one, and none other remains for me to love! I am less restive without a lover, yet less content. This seems anomalous, but it is the true definition of my feelings. A lost love is to the heart as a lost chord is in music!

Mine is not the temperament to indulge in lovers' quarrels. I prefer that life be a harmony. Each discordant note sounded in the love-life of two people puts this life more and more hopelessly out of tune, until at last the melody is forever stilled.

Love is only a shadow, a myth, a phantom of the air! There is a sentiment we call Love, which, founded on the basis of respect and congeniality, outlives the transitory thraldom of Passion's spell.

Sadly, alas, I must record that this sentiment does not exist between Maurel and me.

Again and forever the old cry for Love will sound in my heart. The old hunger will consume it!

Man finds pleasure in new fancies, but woman's heart clings to the loves of her faded youth.

The difference in the physical nature of man and woman explains and emphasizes this condition.

In my studies of life I have seen women of the strongest natures lavishing love on men of the weakest. It is the inconsistency of the heart and the contradiction of human nature.

There is in woman's breast the strong maternal yearning that humors the weaknesses of her lover, as it would condone the offences of a spoiled child.

Mother-love and that between the sexes contain similar elements of endurance, of pity and of forgiveness.

Women of tender natures and of ordinary intellect often love weak men to the end of their checkered lives. But to women of superior intelligence the condoning of vices and the nervous strain of pity are likely to freeze the fountain of their love.

If man be born to guide the life of woman, why does he so pitilessly drag her down to his own level and beneath it?

For each sin of womankind an angel drops a tear! Upon each kindly deed she does an angel smiles!

Maurel would drag me lower still. I will not let

him lead me where he has led other women of his fancy and his whims—to the gutter or the grave!

My mental disturbance interferes with my success in stocks. The pyrotechnics of sugar are calculated to craze the brain of any one who follows them. I seek their allurements out of sheer desperation, because they promise so brightly and disappoint so crushingly. To-day one may be rich with golden results, and on the morrow these results vanish, as the soap-bubbles which hold the fancy of a child for an idle hour.

Association with Maurel augments this fever and is one of its many evil effects. Fred Manton was right in his opinion that Maurel and I must part.

In certain cases, only the surgeon's knife can eliminate deadly poison from the human frame. Maurel's love acts as a poison on my heart. A cancerous growth will form upon it unless at once I plunge into it the knife of separation.

Ah, the sorrow of it, the heartbreak of it! To be thrown once more adrift on Life's tempestuous sea!

I was disturbed in my writing by the card of Albert Vane being brought to me. I received him, because, to the blackness of my mood, any relief was welcome.

The broker was more than usually *débonair* and his coat-flower had attained greater proportions.

"We have not met of late," I smiling said, as I touched Vane's hand in greeting.

Character is defined by the hand, equally with

birth. Albert Vane's hand denotes plebeian blood; it is broad, coarse of texture, with stubby fingers.

Vane once had a fad for having these fingers manicured, but with the frown of the comely artist in nails, his interest flagged. Now these nails are dull and shapeless.

However, Albert Vane is immaculate as to linen and the cut of his clothes.

"I hear that Miss Neville is to marry Fred Manton. It is the gossip of the Clubs," Vane ventured, by way of introduction to our *tête-à-tête*.

I assured him that for once the male denizens of the Clubs were correct in their surmises.

Vane commented on the good fortune of Heloise.

"The gods award to Beauty all their good gifts," I declared.

"Not always, Lenoir," my visitor dissented. "Woman's beauty, alas, often pays its penalty in sorrow. But I honestly trust that Heloise may be the exception which proves the rule. You divined, with your woman's intuition, that I felt no real love for the girl, and I am most pleased that she will realize her fondest hopes in marriage."

"What are these hopes?" I questioned.

"Success in life and temporal pleasures," Vane explained, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Beyond these results, Heloise Neville has no ambition."

"You do not imagine that deep down in her breast may linger the dream of that strange, sweet bliss to which love alone can give realization?"

"Absolutely no!" Vane emphatically declared. "This girl is incapable of an emotion beyond those of the senses! She can enjoy, but she can *not love.*"

"*Could you?*"

"Possibly not now, after my experience with women and my hard knocks in the great prize-ring of the world. I once built castles in the air, as maybe you have done, but, Lenoir, we are of the earth earthy. We indulge in no fine sentimentality, we accept life as it comes to us, instead of idealizing it and finding in the end that our dolls are filled with sawdust."

I told him that, without being personal, I felt some interest as to the meaning of his visit to-night.

"It is to warn you against Solon Maurel," he confessed. "Through me you met him; let me separate you from him. His old sweetheart, or whatever you may term her, is on the rampage. She swore to me to separate you from Maurel, or to kill him. Usually these threats from women are meaningless, but in the eye of Mrs. Mallory is a dancing devil which broods ill both to Maurel and to you."

"I thwarted your desire as to Heloise; whence springs this interest regarding me?" I sneered.

"Because I am man enough to recognize your sense of justice and to desire to mete out to you the same measure that in the future I shall hope to have meted unto me."

Silence fell between us.

"The world is brighter than I pictured it," I thought. "Men are fairer than my fancy painted them." I reached out and grasped the hand of my enemy, Albert Vane, and from our hearts forever was lifted the shadow of distrust.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A SHATTERED IDOL.

HELOISE bounded into my sitting-room this noon, having on her finger a golden purse, its top encrusted with rubies.

"Fred is a darling!" the girl exclaimed.

I agreed with Heloise, and congratulated her on having drawn so great a prize in the lottery of love.

The girl has grown more refined under my tuition. She wears Hudnut's *Violette Superbe* inside the band of her hat or sewed into her gown instead of pungent perfumes sprinkled on her 'kerchief, and her taste as to the toilet improves. She was ravishing to-day in a gown of grass linen, embroidered with rosebuds, and made over reseda silk. Her big Panama hat, with its wealth of roses and clouds of tulle, was tilted over her piquant face. In her corsage a rose nodded its dewy head. Heloise touched it lightly, and laughed.

"Don't be jealous, Lenoir," she said, "when I acknowledge that Solon Maurel sent me a box of roses this morning."

I assured the girl that it was quite thoughtful in Maurel; but I felt that he sent the flowers to punish

me for not having given him the money for which he had asked.

This was the smallest and most unmanly of any of Maurel's recent demonstrations of pique.

A slight wound inflicted by one's lover hurts a woman's heart as much as a great sorrow does.

In the early days of our association, this little attention from Maurel to the girl who was considered my friend, would have aroused my jealousy of both. But since Maurel's influence has partially left me my heart seems so ossified that I no longer can feel.

"I will bring you some roses," Heloise offered, hastily leaving the room; and returning in a moment, she threw six gorgeous long-stemmed roses in my lap.

"I have divided M. Maurel's gift with you. I dare say he meant that we share it," Heloise sweetly said.

At times this girl of the South mingles with much of selfishness much of charm. It is sad that one so fair should lack moral principles and the high sentiments which would render her character as perfect as her face.

There is in woman loveliness of the soul and loveliness of the body; the one is imperishable, the other fades as a flower in the scorching sun.

"I am very angry that Fred's people do not call on me. What reason have they for declining to know me?" Heloise laughingly asked.

"The Nevilles of Louisiana have better blood than the Mantons of New York," the girl went on. "My

father comes of Huguenot ancestry. The Mantons are comparatively new. But they are in the social swim. Were my aunt living, I am not sure that she would regard an alliance with Fred Manton an honor."

It is odd that Heloise does not suspect that the distrust with which Fred's people view his marriage arises from the Bohemianism in which the girl has lived. This is greatly *my fault.* Tales have floated over the sea of my giddy life on the Continent. The Mantons have followed my comet-like course from Petersburg to Paris, from London to Madrid. They imagine that my chaperonage is not the likeliest to shield a young woman from the ready tongue of gossip.

With a breath I could break up this intended marriage. Fred's love would not survive the knowledge of Heloise's episode with Albert Vane, or if his love lingered, his respect for the girl would die, and he would not insult his people with a wife whose honor was smirched.

This marriage *must* take place. I am honest in my belief that it will reform Heloise. The luxury of her life and her husband's devotion surely will satisfy her wandering fancy.

Mrs. Caton awaited my return from the drive; Heloise left us to arrange her toilet for the evening with her lover.

Mrs. Caton has quite a level head as to the status and bearings of her associates.

"Heloise Neville does not improve on nearer acquaintance," the little widow declared. "She amuses me, and as Mrs. Fred Manton she will be a good card to play; but between ourselves, Lenoir, I distrust the girl. I don't wish to figure as a newsmonger, but I feel it a privilege of our friendship to inform you that I ran across Heloise and Solon Maurel tippling at the Waldorf yesterday. The little beauty smiled most luxuriantly into the Frenchman's face. The incident had no import, as the world of New York goes, but it impresses me as treachery on her part towards you."

"What of Maurel's lack of faith?" I smiled.

"Men are never true in detail or in matters of moment. They were created for the gratification of their passions, only," Mrs. Caton declared, with flashing eye.

"With all their faults you love them still."

"Most decidedly. Heaven preserve me from a Paradise of women."

I told Mrs. Caton that neither the actions of Heloise nor those of Solon bothered me a little bit. But I commented that the girl should not take chances of incurring the suspicion or anger of Fred Manton.

"That poor, misguided boy is too much the slave of his fancy for Heloise to be offended at her public *tête-à-têtes* with the sweetheart of his friend," said the widow, with a toss of her head.

"Manton would be deeply grieved did he believe that Heloise Neville and Maurel were meeting alone,

either publicly or privately. He has no admiration for Maurel," I persisted.

"You too are wearying of Maurel!"

"Possibly I am. I have so long been a bird of passage that I cannot locate either my affections or myself."

"This is well and saves you much sorrow. It is the secret of eternal youth for women. Your love of change and carelessness of temperament banishes wrinkles from your brow and your heart. Nothing is really worth a deep regret, though we are tempted to dream again our old love-dreams and mend our broken idols. My policy is to dissipate regretful visions with golden pictures of to-day and to toss the old idols aside with the rubbish of our past," said Mrs. Caton, with a little sigh, which indicated a dash of sentimentality in her nature.

After Mrs. Caton left me I pondered long and wearily upon the incompleteness of life. I dwelt deeply upon its sins and its sorrows. I measured my would-be lover, Maurel, and found him wanting in the forceful element of life.

Strangely Passion's spell is slipping from me. With the clearer vision that my brain affords, I see, with Maurel, only sorrow. Could I pray to the dear God from whom I have wandered, the temper of my prayer would be that He might deliver me from the thralldom of my association with Solon Maurel.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A TRAITOR AND A TRAITRESS.

I RECEIVED Maurel this afternoon. His brow was clouded, his manner was changed.

"You no longer care for me, Lenoir," he said.

"Why should I?" said I, in a despondent tone.

"Why did you ever care for me?" Maurel asked.

"Because my heart clamored for love. I was adrift on life's great boundless sea. You first interested me, then followed the subtle spell of fascination, intensified by similar tastes and close association. Stronger grew the bond, brighter became my hopes for a future built upon the ashes of a blackened past. Life to me had been a burlesque. I trusted that you might make it a pleasing reality. I hoped to save from the shipwreck of my past a few splinters, which, bound together by your love, might prove of sufficient weight to float us both into a safe anchorage. Instead of reaching a port of peace, we have drifted beyond the line of safety, into the broad sea of doubt and of danger. The winds sigh about us, the great waves lash upon us, the sky of our lives is dark and starless. Each moan of the winds brings to me a sigh of regret and a whisper of despair.

We can no longer float. The little raft of our hopes is falling in pieces. The sea of doubt overwhelms us. We are sinking together. You are now, as you were when first we met, a gamester, and, I fear, a liar, as well. Solon Maurel, we have drifted together long enough. Would I save myself it must be at the sacrifice of leaving you."

My speech was less impassioned than was the heart that prompted it. Maurel frowned and drew further from me.

"What better are you than me?" he sneered. "You are a failure like myself."

"Your words are brutal, but true," I admitted. "I *am* a failure; and the greatest proof I have given of this has been my association with you."

"You are a gambler!" Maurel gasped.

"Alas, you speak truly!" I sadly said. "I am powerless to resent your insults. I can only vow that having benefited from the results of my gambling, and having disgraced yourself by taunting me with the practice of a vice alike degrading to both man and woman, from this moment I forever place myself beyond the reach of either your insults or your presence."

"Lenoir, you are mad. Let us forget these words of fury. Let us seek in love the obliteration of anger," Maurel said with a gleam of the old passion in his eyes.

For answer, I rang my bell.

"Show this man to the lift," I sharply said to the boy.

After the departure of Maurel I went into the dainty little suite of rooms occupied by Heloise. The sitting-room walls were hung in old rose denim, and covered with French pictures in white and gold frames. The lace curtains were tied back with broad ribbons of the same color over sash-curtains of old-rose silk. A white and gold cabinet held varied bits of choice bric-à-brac. Among these stood a long-stemmed vase of silver filagree, containing a single *La France* rose. A great bunch of violets and lilies of the valley had been carelessly thrown on a gilt table, which also held, in a gold frame inlaid with turquoise, the photograph of Fred Manton.

The adjoining bedroom was done in French cretonne, and the pink-lined lace-spread on the shining brass bedstead was littered with hats, gloves and veils, indicating the haste in which Heloise had made her toilet for the street. On the dressing-table, amid a lot of Dresden-mounted toilet articles, was a new set of five pieces in tortoise shell. These evidently had been sent to the girl to-day by her lover. His picture, framed in antique brocade, was among the pretty bagatelles.

"Heloise burns the incense of flattery at her lover's shrine," I murmured to myself.

Glancing more closely at Manton's picture, which, like the toilet set, was new to me, I discovered an open note in the nervous French chirography of Maurel.

I read this note for confirmation of my suspicions

regarding both of these so-called friends of mine. It read like this:

"HELOISE,

"Meet me at noon to-morrow at the same place.

"S. MAUREL."

The man knew the girl well enough to command her movements.

As a revelation the thought came to me that Maurel was attempting his arts upon Heloise, in view of her coming marriage, in order that he might benefit financially by it.

"A traitor and a traitress, deeply and doubly-dyed! Let them sink together into the perdition which awaits them!" I thought, as I turned away from the flower-perfumed rooms. My intention of leaving a note for Heloise to go with me to a theatre in the evening was entirely changed by the circumstance of this note. I felt an aversion to her fair face.

Could there linger in my heart one spark of feeling for my false lover? Alas! I knew not if this were true! I realized more than I ever had the fickleness and folly and abandonment to evil of the beings with whom we link our lives, and who drag us into the shadows of eternal doubt.

I went alone for my drive, and I wore violets which had come to me that morning with Moneybags' card.

As my horses pranced through the Park, I thought so deeply that the splendid panorama passed unnoticed by me. I drove until the sun set and the shadows fell among the trees. Nature is to me a great tonic. It rebuilds the tissues of my brain and purifies my heart. Before seeking her soothing influence, I had been tempted to revenge myself on the Frenchman and to cloud the future of Heloise. I almost felt it to be my duty to warn Fred Manton against her treachery to both himself and me. But the sweet voice of charity whispered, "Give the girl her chance." I came home calm and resigned to the loveless life which lay before me.

A hasty tap at my door announced Heloise. Never had the girl's beauty beamed more brilliantly than as she skipped into the room in her bicycle suit. The short plaid skirt reached to the top of her doeskin leggins, below which peeped out her high-heeled patent leather shoes. An Eton jacket of dark blue cloth opened over a red waistcoat, buttoned with tiny gold buttons. She wore a gray Alpine hat with two dark blue wings at the side.

"Fred is downstairs awaiting your acceptance of his invitation for dinner at the Holland House, and later a music hall, if you like," the girl animatedly said, tossing a box of bonbons in my lap.

A sudden desire to be alone swept over me and influenced me to decline the proffered pleasure.

Three hours later I received Albert Vane's card, on which he had written these words:

"I must see you at once. Maurel is dying."

When the broker was ushered into my sitting-room his pallid face corroborated the tragedy which his written words implied.

"Maurel has been hurt?" I gasped.

"Quite true," Vane acknowledged. "He was stabbed in his chambers by Mrs. Mallory an hour ago."

"Will he die?" I asked, with quivering voice, for in the face of death a woman's heart recalls the old tenderness for a man whom she has loved.

"Undoubtedly he will," Vane sighed. "Come with me, Lenoir; Maurel asked for you. It is the last request that he will ever make."

As I did when the child of this man lay dying, I hastily shrouded myself in a cloak and accompanied my messenger to the death-bed of Maurel. We were silent during the short drive. I was more silent still when I stood beside the wounded man.

"She stabbed me," he whispered. "I deserved it for my treachery to womankind. I have played my last card, Lenoir, and lost. Forgive me and distrust Heloise."

Maurel's dying words betrayed a woman's honor!

The film of death gathered over his eyes, his voice grew husky; then eternal silence sealed his lips and Solon Maurel's career was ended.

The midnight stars shone in the blue sky which crowned the beautiful night as Albert Vane and I drove back to my home.

"Has your experience with Solon Maurel hurt you?" my companion questioned.

"Yes," I acknowledged. "Betrayal of human faith kills human hope, and hope is the well-spring of joy."

"Peace may come to you at last," Vane softly whispered.

"Alas, it cannot!" I sighed. "For me, its white wings are forever folded, and in its place the blood-red banner of success flaunts its gaudy coloring. Love demands sorrow as its price. Success brings comfort in atonement for the lost angels of hope and happiness. Love is a maiden, all gauze and smiles and visions. Hope is a matron with flowers yet unwithered and gems undimmed. Success is a queen, at whose feet both youth and age lay the garlands of Love and Hope in exchange for the laurel of Victory."

My companion informed me that he had gathered from Maurel's man some explanation of the tragic end of the Frenchman's life. Mrs. Mallory had gone alone to Maurel's chambers and persisted in remaining until his return. She paced the floor, evidently in an excited mood. When Maurel arrived, the man overheard angry words, coupled with the name of Heloise. Maurel vainly strove to soothe the woman, when suddenly he gave a sharp cry, and Mrs. Mallory glided from the rooms, past the French valet and dashed down the stairs. The man opened the door through which she had passed out, and entering the

room, he found Maurel lying on the floor with a small dagger of antique workmanship on a rug beside him. It was stained with blood. The man hastily summoned the landlord and sent for a physician. On the hilt of the dagger were the initials "M. M." The man then telegraphed Albert Vane as the friend most familiar with the life of the Frenchman; and Vane fulfilled Maurel's dying request that he would bring me there.

"Where did Maurel's murderess disappear to, and how long can she elude the police?" I asked.

"The physician notified the authorities of the murder, but the woman's residence was known only to me, and I kept her secret. She will, no doubt, sail under an alias from another city, for foreign shores, and it is unlikely that she will ever meet the punishment of her crime," said Vane.

Mrs. Mallory seemed too clever to have left behind her the proof of her bloody deed.

"A woman crazed with jealous anger is too insane to control her actions," Vane declared.

"Heloise Neville was the immediate cause of this murder," I avowed to Vane. "Maurel's last words to me were 'Distrust Heloise.' I have proof of the wisdom of such an injunction in a note which I saw from him, asking that she meet him to-morrow. The woman who had followed Maurel over continents and seas must also have had proof against the girl that made her desperate. This girl's fatal charm has

cost a human life and will lead to her own destruction. Beauty is a gift of the gods for happiness, or an allurement of the devil for sin. Leave me, now," I murmured to my guest. "Let me think out this problem of the future of Heloise Neville."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HELOISE'S LAST CHANCE.

HELOISE dashed into my apartment on the following morning with a newspaper containing a distorted account of the death of Solon Maurel. The story ran that the man had been stabbed by a woman, supposed to have been his wife, from whom he had separated, and that the murder was the result of his lack of support of her. It mentioned the fact of a knife of quaint, foreign workmanship having been found near the bedside of the dead man, and there was an allusion to Maurel's attentions to a dashing Frenchwoman, well known in society both here and abroad. The name of Heloise was fortunately omitted from the article, which wound up with the hope that the efforts of the detectives might prove availing to bring the supposed murderess to justice.

"What does this mean?" Heloise cried out.

I told her that it meant that Mrs. Mallory had stabbed her former lover in his chambers on the preceding night.

"When did you hear of this?" the girl asked, with rising color.

"Immediately after the stabbing and the escape of the woman," I replied.

Heloise scowled and declared it odd that I had not notified her at the time.

"It was late in the evening when Albert Vane and I returned from the death-bed of Maurel, and I had no reason to believe that you would care to have your sleep disturbed with such tragic news."

Heloise impatiently paced the room.

"Who will get possession of Maurel's belongings?" she anxiously inquired.

"They will undoubtedly be held until Albert Vane receives instructions from Solon's relatives in France. He left to them no legacy but debts, and to the world no memory but that of his dishonor," I sighed.

"Why did Mrs. Mallory kill Maurel? Was she prompted to it by jealousy of *you?*" the girl asked, with the look of a sleuth-hound in her dark eyes.

"No. She was suspicious of and infuriated by your recent conduct with her lover," I scornfully said. "The murder of Maurel should rest upon your soul."

"I fail to comprehend your meaning," the girl said, watching me narrowly.

"You understand me perfectly," I insisted. "If your conscience be not quite dead, it hurts you now for having betrayed a woman's trust and a man's honor, as you did in your secret meetings with Solon Maurel."

Heloise's eyes grew stony, as she faced me with folded arms.

"What shall you do about it?" she defiantly asked.

"This question puzzled me during my long vigil last night. I have solved it at last. As the good God gives us a final chance, so will I give your last chance to you. Marry Fred Manton with your wretched secrets buried in my heart and in that of Albert Vane and in the dead man's grave. Present to the world on your wedding-day a picture of innocence and love; but remember that while I live to know it, you shall not deceive your husband as you have deceived your lover. On this great opportunity your soul's salvation rests. Hasten your bridal day. I will see you through this affair until the strong arms and noble heart of your husband shall embrace and shield you from life's sorrows and sins. Ere your bridal flowers shall fade I will have parted from you for a long journey that may bring me rest."

Heloise's mood softened. She had won the day, and girl-like she began to cry.

"You always have been kind to me, Lenoir, kinder than I deserved," she sorrowfully admitted. "But, I promise you that this awful lesson shall not be lost on me. I will remember your warning, and my duty to Fred Manton."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE TRUMP WHICH TAKES THE TRICK OF LIFE.

PARIS is radiant with sunshine and fragrant with flowers. As I drove this afternoon in the Bois my mood responded to the brilliant scene. The air of Paris is an antidote for sorrow.

Fred Manton and his smartly-gowned wife passed me at the entrance to the Bois. Her husband's family have accepted Heloise, and her beauty and style are causing a *furore*. Heloise brought me a jewelled fan which had belonged to Madame Du Barry, of whose mercurial career there remains to the world only the cut of a corsage, the shade of a ribbon and a fashion for the *coiffure*.

Albert Vane called at my hotel last evening to ask me to dine with him to-night at the *Café des Ambassadeurs*. Vane has made some money and is out for the *grand tour* during his brief holiday. He brought the news of Mrs. Caton's marriage to quite a young man of some wealth, and also informed me that he had seen Mrs. Mallory in Paris, heavily veiled and walking with a stick from a shop to her coupé.

Retribution will strike its fatal fangs into her wretched heart; for the woman loved Maurel in her

coarse and reckless way. She may evade the law, but she cannot drown the memories of her ill-spent and darkened life.

The Mantons have asked me to accompany them to Switzerland, but Heloise's old charm for me has forever fled, and, much as I would like to please Fred, I have not the duplicity to accept the friendship of his wife.

I met Mrs. Steele this morning at the Louvre. She is still in search of new furbelows, and possibly of a new husband. She seemed strangely aged, beneath the glare of the sun, and she was more than usually rouged. In her ceaseless pursuit of happiness this accomplished and clever woman has neglected her great opportunities of making others happy the while. Mrs. Steele is a marvel of feminine success and failure.

Long ago that greatest and truest interpreter of human emotions—Thackeray wrote: "Which of us has his desire, or, having it, is satisfied?" To the public and the critics who may read this record of the people who have shaped my life I, too, submit the question.

Do we not pursue phantoms and blot the sky of pleasure with clouds of discontent? If life's rough road lead at last into the smooth and shaded path of contentment, we shall have fulfilled our heart's dearest hope.

The past few months seem vanished from me like a hideous dream. Memory strikes the chord, long stilled, of my forgotten love, and to-night, amid the

splendor of the world's gayest centre, my heart aches for the old sweet days and the old sweet love of Herbert Lee.

As a drowning person realizes a lifetime within a second, my past sweeps over me as I float onward into the unsounded sea of the future.

Moneybags writes that he misses me amid the drudgery of his business life. He seems without other motive than the accumulation of wealth. He thinks of coming abroad for diversion *and to see me!* Unless fate intervene, I shall play Moneybags—the ace of diamonds—as my last trump, which shall take the trick of Life!

THE END.

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